



## **Public Construction under Diocletian**

A Study of State Involvement in Construction in Roman Era Towns  
in Present Day Tunisia and Eastern Algeria.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Public Construction under Diocletian. A study of State Involvement in Construction  
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This study traces the development of building inscriptions in Roman North Africa, in order to understand the rich epigraphic record testifying to public construction during the reign of Diocletian. In particular, it examines the role of the imperial government in construction, both in how it itself built and how it related to locals who did. Treating construction as a form of communication between builder and society, I have examined the claims made by the state as it took on the role of builder, and to what social groups these claims were directed. A wide approach has been called for to understand the role played by public construction – and by broadcasting it through inscriptions – for the negotiation of influence in the province. I have examined the activities of both imperial and local builders, which has revealed well defined conventions as to what and where to build, and how to communicate it. Against this backdrop, I have traced the relations of the Diocletianic government to a number of social strata, as expressed through building inscriptions, from rural entrepreneurs and small town councilors to Carthaginian senators. An image has emerged of a government that was keenly aware of the social makeup of the province, and deeply invested in its economic fabric, concerned with maintaining a viable, small scale network of independent municipalities as a counterweight to the interests of the highest elites, while at the same time maintaining stable relations to said elites.

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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **I.1 Project presentation**

This study revolves around a group of building inscriptions from Roman North Africa, in an area corresponding to present Tunisia and Eastern Algeria and dating to the reign of Diocletian (284-305). A great many of them bear witness to an unusual level of involvement by central authorities in the built landscape of African towns, through governors, legates and curators initiating and supervising construction in the name of the emperors. My aim has been to understand what relations these texts represent between local communities and central government – what the incentives were to publish them, who the audiences were, and what the government represented to them. I have examined the texts from a multitude of angles and compared it to a range of materials, in an attempt to locate them as precisely as possible within local practices on the one hand, imperial initiatives on the other, both contemporary and earlier. I will argue that the Diocletianic government was concerned with communicating the activity of its bureaucracy, employing a number of media to this effect and circulating them in new ways. Rather than an attempt to proclaim a new ideology, I see these expressions as part of a routinely applied rhetoric that had long surrounded state communications, the novelty being their wide dissemination rather than their content. I will argue that one of the key elements of the communications of the Diocletianic government was to present the state as a supporter of the provincial townships, against forces that encroached on their viability: the very wealthy, foreign threats, or those not complying with societal norms. Framing the emperors as maintaining and protecting public architecture formed an important part of this aim, and it is this brand of

construction, rather than the more well known imperial residences and monuments, that is the subject of this study. Much effort has been spent on the local context, to determine what manner of communities were chosen, and to what extent the building activities of Diocletian and his peers represent continuities or breaks with local conventions. The result is a miniature image of the Diocletianic administration at work, from below rather than the more customary top-down perspective, seen against a multifarious socio-economic background where many interests collided or coincided – those of the imperial administration, of ambitious farmers, small town decurions, and a wide range of provincial elites.

My study began from a wish to understand the widespread building activities of the Diocletianic government throughout the empire as a social strategy. Diocletian and his peers were by all accounts remarkably prolific builders; a range of ancient writers underline their construction projects – even their enemies, if converted to mockery. Lactantius’ description of Diocletian’s overwhelming desire to build, *cupiditas aedificandi*, is an ironic inversion of a canonical virtue included in all imperial biographies at the time.<sup>1</sup> Ancient writers were mainly concerned with the monumental, in Rome or other cities of consequence; when Lactantius mentions *fabricae*, factories for the production of arms and army clothing, it is no doubt meant to contrast against the more glamorous structures expected in such an account. Modern scholarship has likewise been concerned mainly with palaces and monuments. But the construction portfolio

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<sup>1</sup> Lactantius *De mort.* 7.8-9: *Huc accedebat infinita quaedam cupiditas aedificandi... Hic basilicae, hic circus, hic moneta, hic armorum fabrica, hic uxori domus, hic filiae.* See also Eusebius, *Chron. ad a.* 302g, baths at Carthage and Rome; Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 39:45, construction in Carthage, Milan and Nicomedia; Chron. 354 on construction in Rome; in Antioch, Malalas, *Chron.* 12.37-8 calling Diocletian *φιλοκτίστης*. Lactantius inverts other imperial virtues into sins, such as conferring with advisors, transformed into a wish to implicate others in crimes. “Good” emperors listen to advice, see e.g. Herodian, *Hist.* 1.2.2, 1.4.1, 1.8.1, 2.14.3, 5.1.5, 6.1.2, while Commodus does not, 1.6.1; also Dio Cassius *Rom. hist.* 77.18.4.

associated with the Tetrarchic emperors is far more diverse, including a range of projects such as the redrawing of street networks, construction and renovation of quays, roads and bridges, forts, aqueducts, dams and nymphaea, but also civic structures such as basilicas, porticoes, and city squares. To this should be added entertainment structures such as theatres, amphitheatres and baths.<sup>2</sup> Locations chosen include not only large cities but also towns of less obvious prominence, in all corners of the empire. While the attribution to an imperial agent is debatable in some cases, it nonetheless remains clear that the government of Diocletian made a greater impact as builder in the provincial context than most administrations before it.

My initial explanation for this phenomenon was based on the argument of the sociologist Charles Tilly that centralizing states, in order to guarantee functionality, need to secure the loyal cooperation of the lower end of its social pyramid, which compels them to recognize these strata as essential parts of society in ways that oligarchic systems are less inclined to.<sup>3</sup> His work concerns the creation of national states – “states governing multiple contiguous regions and their cities by means of centralized, differentiated, and autonomous structures,” as opposed to loose empires, which left local administration to regional powerholders wielding much authority, or city-states and leagues.<sup>4</sup> He describes the process of their formation as driven by extraction, which entails bargaining with the subject population. The ultimate aim is preparation for war, which involves rulers in extracting the means for it from those who hold the essential resources – men, arms, food supplies, or money to buy them – and who will only give them up through

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<sup>2</sup> See below n. 70 for examples. The list is by no means comprehensive.

<sup>3</sup> Tilly 2007; initially developed in the first chapter of Tilly 1990.

<sup>4</sup> Tilly 1990: 2; see also 5, 21-22.



coercion, or compensation.<sup>5</sup> Out of this situation developed the idea that “rights” and “duties” governs the relation between state and populace; ideas which are the hallmark of national states.

According to Tilly, the means of extraction available for the state are determined by the prevailing class structure, and the relations different classes maintain to the ruler.<sup>6</sup> I wished to read the Diocletianic building spree against this light, as part of a strategy to approach a wider subset of the population and engage them in direct relations to central government, thus creating a wider loyalty base, which would both halt fragmentation of the empire and aid extraction of resources. If it could be shown that Diocletian’s government were approaching its subject base, this might deepen the understanding of the transformations that the Roman state underwent at the time. The Roman Empire had long since ceased to represent a conqueror city and her occupied territories, and my ambition was to show that it was, in the wake of the franchise of 212, developing toward what might be called a national state – a collective of citizens, not subjects. This placed new demands on central administration that for many reasons had not been met during the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. I saw the building projects as an attempt to do so, as manifestations of a wish to present imperial government in the role of benefactor to local communities. Through such measures, the government of Diocletian addressed wider subsets of the provincial population than any before them, demonstrating that the government held up its end, and would thus be better placed to insist that the subjects meet their responsibilities as well. Tilly describes the developing national state as trying hard to create administrative hierarchies, and to eliminate autonomous bases of power.<sup>7</sup> Diocletian and his peers are famous for their extension of the

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<sup>5</sup> E.g., Tilly 1990: 8, 14.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., Tilly 1990: 15.

<sup>7</sup> Tilly 1990: 24-5.

bureaucracy, scorned as “meddling” by many observers but perhaps viewed in a different light from the local standpoint, at least by viewers below the higher aristocracies.

This led to a secondary set of questions regarding the relations between the government and elites, often the scapegoats in the rhetoric by which states woo their citizen bases. That of Diocletian is no exception; he has been described as critically at odds with the senate in particular. The ambition of the state to reach deeper into provincial society is often seen as a strike, willed or accidental, against leading municipal strata. I was curious to find how the building projects of the Diocletianic government related to those initiated by local agents, seeing the role played by public construction in the established description of how local elites created and upheld their influence. According to the model outlined by Veyne, *euergetism* was the lifeblood of ancient communities, which were provided with amenities by their wealthiest individuals in exchange for power and prestige. Imperial involvement is for the most part described as compromising the independence of the towns, appropriating their funds for imperial projects and depleting the desire (and ability) of their elites to contribute, their “*Repräsentationswillen*.” This, it is argued, eventually led to the demise of the ancient town – and by extension, of Classical civilization.<sup>8</sup> Did the construction of Diocletian’s governors

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<sup>8</sup> The principal position was set out by Paul Zanker: imperial involvement in the municipalities suffocated the crucial “*Repräsentationswillen*” on the part of potential benefactors with the result that the towns sank into indolence and *luxuria*. For a summary of this position and arguments against it, Kleinwächter 2001: 22-24. The disappearance of inscriptions testifying to private construction has been interpreted as disappearance of *euergetism*, caused (as summarized by Saastamoinen 2008a: 38) by impoverishment due to heavy taxation, and/or by a loss of interest in holding municipal positions. Lewin 2001, although dating the development to the 4th c., describes the same process: government interference presented an obstacle to the emergence of an active local class capable of governing the towns. He makes the absence (from epigraphic sources) of *euergetism* the very core of the problem, and with A. H. M. Jones suggests taxation of the towns to be to blame. For the later period, Lepelley 1979: 13 summarized the view of the

diminish that of locals, or affect it in any way? And if so, can this be seen as opposition? Public construction offers a rare opportunity to compare imperial and elite activity, thanks to the practice of inscribing which provides glimpses of the social processes behind the buildings, a material that has often been employed to frame the role of the local benefactor. To understand the situation under Diocletian, I have had to examine the building practices – or rather, the epigraphic practices associated with buildings – of locals through the imperial period, as well as that of previous imperial administrations. The outcome has proven to be far more complex than initially imagined, and in particular the activities of “locals,” by no means a homogenous group, have required differentiation. A number of social strata have been identified within the material that each had its own aims, each treated in different ways by imperial government.

One outcome of this study is the realization that the image of the town as a self-contained cell with a balanced exchange between benefactor and community requires modification – in fact, few of the builders here treated had their eyes set on the towns in which they built, but had their ultimate goals outside them, and the goodwill of the communities themselves played a comparatively small part in motivating construction. The only agent that seems directly concerned with their well-being appears rather to be the imperial government, and not only that of Diocletian, although the level of ambition shown by his administration goes beyond any other. I will argue that the threat to the ancient town came not from central authorities, but from the accumulation of resources in the hands of a small wealthy elite. The well-being of the state and that of the towns were ultimately connected – a circumstance that was fully recognized by the

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town as a prison for impoverished decurions: “...une implacable tyrannie bureaucratique aurait supprimé toute autonomie locale et asservi la classe décurionale...” Lepelley 1997: 336 repeats the common view that a decline of euergetism signals the disappearance of a “civic spirit.”

Diocletianic government, which not only went to great lengths to secure a viable civic network in outlying areas, but also took pains to communicate that they did, using this as a means to present themselves as competent rulers deserving the loyal cooperation of their subjects.

The examination has thus in many ways confirmed my initial hypothesis that Diocletian and his peers used construction as a means to achieve cohesion and cooperation, and that the way it was presented to local communities is a leaf of the same book as the rhetoric that accompanied the contemporary administrative reforms. Certainly they bear witness to a concern with placing the government closer to the citizenry. Rather than opposition with local elites, however, I have found an intricate web of relations, some that may perhaps be seen as opposition against local groups, but others that are better understood as cooperation. The end result has been, I hope, a more nuanced image both of how the administration of Diocletian interacted with provincial populations, and how local elite strata related to their respective communities. As for the viability of the ancient towns, I have found little to support the idea that the impact on municipal life by the actions of the Diocletianic government was negative. The extent to which state control of municipal resources was a reality, or a novelty, is open to question, as is the frequent claim, based on epigraphic material, that the towns entered a period of decline after Diocletian.

### *Methods and materials*

More and more scholars insist that regional studies are necessary.<sup>9</sup> Mine certainly became one – instead of the overarching theoretical perspective initially imagined, it has come to focus on the

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<sup>9</sup> Rambaldi 2009: 287 underlines the importance of the local context when studying construction, as does Horster 2001: 8, 19, who claims that to understand imperial construction, one must also consider the activity of local builders. Witschel 2004: 254-5 calls for a regional perspective when



Fig. 1. *AE* 1968.599, *Musti*, a typical building inscription. It includes a “starting formula” in the form of a dedication to the emperor Trajan, the name of the builder *M. Valerius Fuscus*, his present honor of *duumvir* and the one he builds in order to attain, that of *flamen perpetuus*. It specifies what was paid for this honor (10,000 HS), and that he spent beyond this requirement. It also tells us that the object built was a temple portico, although not to what deity. Fuscus further mentions that he has made contributions to two other sanctuaries, those of Dis and Ceres. Some inscriptions also include names of relatives, whose careers the builders wished to promote, or sums spent in this manner by ancestors. Many include a supplement describing the dedication ceremonies, specifying the banquets and games given at the event, as well as gifts distributed.

local to an almost obsessive extent. I chose to begin with a rarely studied cache of inscriptions from North Africa, an area that has the virtue of featuring strong elites, and where the chances of recreating the social background to building projects were better than in most places due to the rich epigraphic material; only Italy is on a par (and only the most prolific Italian *regiones*). My catalogue consists of c. 700 building inscriptions, out of more than 1,000 from North Africa.<sup>10</sup> I

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evaluating “crisis” narratives. Johansson de Château 2009: 26 also calls for contextualization, to safeguard against applying colonial perspectives when interpreting North African materials.

<sup>10</sup> Saastamoinen 2006: 1914-5 (also 2008a: 14) calculated that the more than 50,000 African inscriptions represent 17-25% of all Latin inscriptions. Of these, building inscriptions make up c.

was also attracted by the fact that it was off the beaten track in terms of scholarship on the period: the African provinces housed no imperial capitals or palaces, none of the emperors hailed from them, troops were few, and what disturbances occurred were marginal – what was built would be routine rather than informed by emergencies or special considerations. Moreover, the area is rich in archaeology, not only remains of buildings but also survey and pottery data, which provide a deeper understanding of demographic and economic developments in the area. The key position of Africa as exporter of agrarian goods also factored into my choice; it was a region no emperor could easily afford to neglect. The choice proved a lucky one, as the area provided numerous instances of what seemed precisely the type of activity that I was hoping to identify.

However, it opened as many questions as it answered, about the at times surprising choices of locations, and why there are important – and as it seems, deliberate – silences in the record. Instead of continuing on to other provinces as initially planned, I chose to remain in North Africa and delve more deeply into the local context, in an attempt to understand the towns in the area, and the meaning of posing as a builder in them, over the *longue durée*. The inscriptions from the entire imperial period have been scrutinized in detail, within a limited region corresponding to the non-desert parts of Tunisia and Eastern Algeria. Distinctions have been drawn not only between imperial and local agents but between a number of local social strata whose building activities differ significantly; to simply bunch local agents as “provincials” is to ignore steep hierarchies that were deeply felt in the local context. Differentiation has been required both among urban elites and the farming population, which was also highly stratified.

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2%. The tables presented by Jouffroy 1986: 11 are in need of an update but still give a good sense of regional distributions of building projects through the imperial period, the majority of which are attested through epigraphy: Africa Proconsularis at 586 trumps both Latium at 380 and Campania at 258. Byzacena at 154 is less prolific, but still surpasses all other Italian regions.

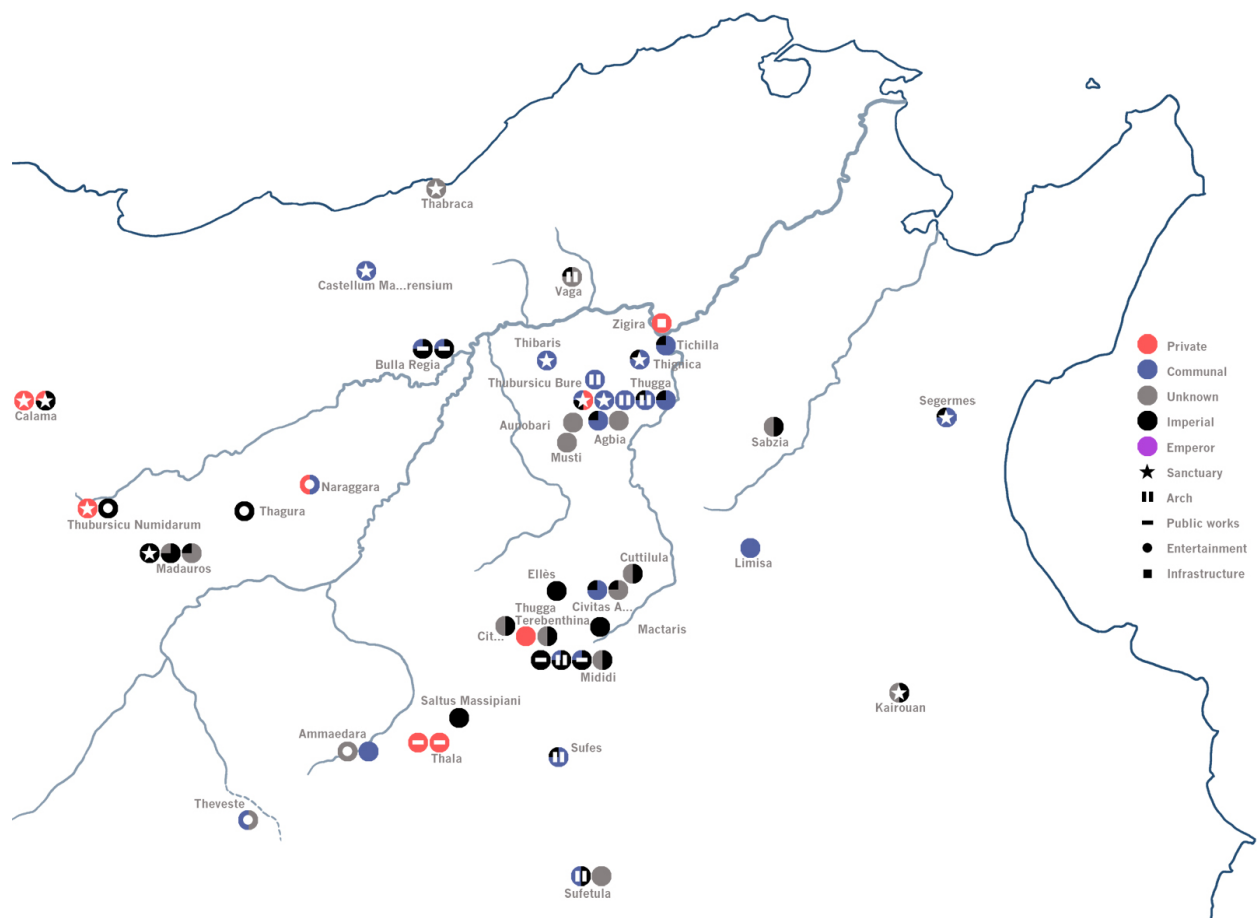


Fig. 2. Buildings attested in the area studied in inscriptions dating to Diocletian. Each dot represents a structure, the color the type of builder, the symbol the object built. The map is available in larger format in Appendix A.

The point of departure for the study is the epigraphic record of public constructions from the Late Antique provinces of *Africa Proconsularis* and *Byzacena* that date to the reign of Diocletian, which consists of 51 inscriptions testifying to 53 building projects. A significant number of these involve imperial representatives, as initiators, propagators, supervisors, and dedicators. Among questions in need of answers, the first concerns how the record compares to those of previous periods. Does it represent a departure from established practices, and if so, in

what respects – in choices of locations, objects, and presentation, or merely in terms of frequency? Another question is whether imperial building activities had any effect on those of local builders, or if the latter continued to follow its old conventions. In order to answer these questions, a thorough examination of the activities of both locals and imperial agents, throughout the imperial period, has been necessary, and I have assembled a vast corpus of material for this purpose. The most common method applied to this material in scholarship is quantitative, an approach that I will argue has considerable problems, both in the rather crude categories on which most calculations have been based, and in the conclusions drawn from them. To some extent I have found it necessary to quantify as well, but have striven to avoid the pitfalls of this method by taking more factors into account and using finer categories, as well as bringing circumstances that affect the record in significant ways to the reader's attention. My main interest lies in presentation, how the projects were communicated, and to whom, for which a quantitative approach is not altogether helpful or necessary: a multitude of approaches will instead be applied to understand the material, and I will make much use of maps to visualize properties and bring out significant patterns.

Although the first building inscriptions appear already in the time of Julius Caesar, I have limited the study to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. The first 150 years have yielded but a few scattered instances, and these differ in many ways from later practices in terms of who the builders were, as well as where, and what, they built. From Trajan onward, conventions had settled, and these remained remarkably stable henceforth, regardless of fluctuations in frequency. At the later end, I have limited my period to the abdication of Diocletian in 305. Accounts of Roman imperial history tend to treat Diocletian and the Tetrarchy as the beginning of Late Antiquity rather than



the end of the High Empire, as I have chosen to do here. I am not against such a periodization in general, but for the purposes of this study it has been more relevant look backward, to try to understand the situation that was being responded to. The frequent practice of compounding the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine has at times obscured the particulars of the period. It is not uncommon to see the reign of Diocletian as a embryonic stage, and to evaluate the aims of measures taken at the time from what succeeding emperors chose to make of them, a manner of teleological argumentation that I have labored to avoid.<sup>11</sup> At least as far as building inscriptions go, there are reasons to reject a continuity of policy: the record stops dead after the death of Constantius I in 306, not to resurface until decades later.<sup>12</sup> The factors that motivated the use of epigraphy to present public construction had clearly changed. To define the period, I will use the terms “Diocletianic” or “reign of Diocletian” rather than “Tetrarchy.” This should not be taken to imply that I believe imperial policy to be conceived by Diocletian personally, but is simply a chronological marker. Although the activities of local builders continue unabated until 305, most if not all of the imperial activity treated in this study dates to the Dyarchy, i.e., the joint rule of Diocletian and Maximian (285-293). Using the label “Tetrarchic” would simply be misleading.

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<sup>11</sup> Among scholars who view the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine as a continuum are Barnes 1982, and more recently Porena 2003: 9-10. If often justified, the conflation is not advisable in the case of building epigraphy since there are significant differences between them. I considered continuing until 306 and the death of Constantius I, which would have led to the inclusion of a few dedications; however, none of them would have altered any of the conclusions presented in this study and I decided to keep the retirement of Diocletian on May 1 305 as the cutoff.

<sup>12</sup> The hiatus in the record of building inscriptions, for all agents, from 305 onward is broken only by a dedication to *Clementia* at *Cillium* in 312-4 (*CIL* 8.210b) and some work done to baths at Carthage in 317-8 (*CIL* 8.24582). The medium resurfaces at a regular but far lower pace (a third of that of Diocletian) in the 330's. Examples given by Lewin 2001 include only the most prominent colonies: Carthage, *Utica*, *Cirta*. Constantine poses as builder through generalizing statements in his titulature (e.g. *CIL* 8.1179) but nothing is actually built. Leone 2007: 82 claims that Constantine and his sons were involved with construction, but mainly by way of legislation.

The first three chapters will be devoted to the epigraphic record, examining in Chapter II the practice of inscribing buildings and how local agents engaged in it. Chapter III will be devoted to emperors and imperial representatives, tracing not only their visibility in building inscriptions but also by way of statues and other monuments. Against this background I will continue in Chapter IV to discuss the building activity attested for the reign of Diocletian, of local and imperial builders both. I identify and set out the defining features for what I see as an initiative in the area of construction on the part of the state rather than as imperial propaganda.

In the last chapter I investigate the potential reasons behind this initiative with the aid of supplementary sources, of two main categories; on the one hand archaeological data which can be used to reconstruct the economy and demography of the region, on the other, sources for the administrative reforms and other materials that bring visibility to the imperial bureaucracy. The archaeological sources have brought a closer understanding of the nature and significance of the locations chosen for construction. It is a common and valid critique aimed at studies of African epigraphy that they neglect archaeological data, especially when applying statistics without due caution.<sup>13</sup> My initial plan was to treat standing structures along with those known solely from inscriptions, which would allow me to consider features such as placement, scale, sightlines, ornamentation and so forth. It was however soon evident that this was not possible; only in rare

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<sup>13</sup> E.g. Ben Abdallah *et al.* 1998: 37: “.. l’épigraphie a régné jusqu’à une date récente de façon quelque peu tyrannique dans les recherches sur l’Antiquité de la Tunisie ..” Kleinwächter 2001: 10-12 sums up some of the arguments against an overfocus on epigraphy and the faulty conclusions it has at times lead to. So also Noël Duval in response to Waldherr 1987-1989: 132-133, warning against treating building inscriptions in isolation and against neglecting the vagaries of epigraphy over time.

cases is an inscription directly associable to a building.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, African buildings can rarely be dated with the precision required. Building techniques remained remarkably stable; for instance, the widespread use of *opus africanum* continued throughout the empire and into the middle ages. To consult catalogues of construction that include archaeological remains is to run the risk of circularity – the vast majority of items listed are dated by means of inscriptions.<sup>15</sup> Of what is not, many objects end up in the rather unhelpful “late 3<sup>rd</sup> - early 4<sup>th</sup> c.” category. Instead of augmenting my database, I have employed archaeological sources to supply the background against which to correctly understand the inscriptions. This has provided an indispensable check against the common error of equating building epigraphy with the built environment. A further set of data, which forms the basis of chapter V.1, is derived from pottery finds, surveys and excavations of economic facilities. These have become a major focus for research on Roman North Africa in recent decades, especially for the Late Roman period, which has been shown to be one of considerable success for the economy of the area. In terms of exports of agricultural and manufactured goods, the African provinces then reached a dominant position in the empire, a

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<sup>14</sup> A Tetrarchic arch at *Sufetula* (CIL 8.232), which although large presents no stylistic elements that distinguish it from other arches. Wesch-Klein 1990: 23 points out that the lack of correlation between building epigraphy and structures is general and not particular to my period. Few inscriptions can be checked back with archaeology.

<sup>15</sup> Hélène Jouffroy 1986, Anna Leone 2007 and Simone Rambaldi 2009 all have the ambition to cover construction activity in general, but the vast majority of items in their catalogues are culled from building inscriptions. To as Jouffroy attribute undated projects to periods that have large epigraphic records (for the most part to Septimius Severus) has the effect of replicating the chronology of epigraphy and in cumulative fashion reinforcing it. Such argumentation is entirely circular and has to be rejected. Similarly, Ben Hassen & Golvin 1998: 117 claimed that the amphitheatre at *Uthina* “fut construit au plus tard au II<sup>e</sup> siècle p.C, époque d’apogée de la ville, qui est celle de la réalisation d’autres grands édifices publics mieux datés.” In fact, it has recently been discovered that it was raised, not in the reign of Septimius Severus, but under Hadrian. A Severan bias is very common in African scholarship, and caution is often due when items are dated to this period. See the introduction to the catalogue, pp. 348-9 for dating criteria.

development that was well underway in the time of Diocletian and forms an important backdrop to the building activities in the African towns.

The sources for the administrative reforms of Diocletian, to be treated in V.2, are for the most part documentary. Among them are the Prices edict, in particular the preamble, and a row of lesser known imperial pronouncements attested in inscriptions and papyri. Another important source consists of the first two legal codes (*Codex Gregorianus* and *Codex Hermogenianus*). Features that factor into my interpretation are circulation, language, audience, and how the relation between state and subject is described in the texts. The monumental frame given to the new bureaucracy through monuments, inscriptions and governmental structures will also be discussed, as well as the challenges that faced the bureaucrats when dealing with local elites.

The last section of chapter V will be devoted to this particular relation: between the Diocletianic government, as represented by the governors and their deputies, and the most powerful provincial elites, in Africa represented by the senatorial families based at Carthage. Throughout this study, the city of Carthage will play a significant part, as much through its impact on the epigraphic material of other towns as through its own peculiar silence – it is a rarely recognized circumstance that the city described by Herodian as the second most prominent in the empire (along with Alexandria) is critically underrepresented in epigraphy, which at times has led to misrepresentations of its significance.<sup>16</sup> Absent is also any sign that the government

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<sup>16</sup> Herodian *Hist.* 7.6.1. His assessment is likely based on the strong influence wielded by their elites. In terms of population, Carthage trailed behind Alexandria, and likely also Antioch, although numbers for either are open to doubt. Duncan-Jones calculated the population of Carthage to c. 300,000, while that of Antioch during the principate is usually estimated at c. 400,000 (assuming that a free population of c. 200,000 was accompanied by as many slaves). Ephesus is almost on a par, with numbers offered in the range of 180,000-250,000. For Carthage,

promoted itself in the role of builder in the area dependent on Carthage, whose wealthy and powerful elites, I will argue, were approached by the imperial government in a different way than the communities in the rural periphery were. This stance of respectful distance was adopted by the state toward the highest elites elsewhere in the empire as well. Instead of opposition, I suggest there was an uneasy equilibrium, involving elements of both consensus and conflict.

## **I.2 Historiography**

The range of subjects touched upon in this study is too great for their historiography to be comprehensively treated, and I will concentrate my efforts on those that I have considered the most relevant. These I will divide in three: questions current in historical research on Diocletian, art historical debates, and scholarship on Roman North Africa, which will be treated in the following subchapter, compounded with a general introduction to the region and its history. The bibliography for several discussions will be presented together with their respective treatments, and I will here only sketch a brief outline of general trends in scholarship on the period.

### *Sources and debates concerning Diocletian and his reign*

The literary sources for the reign of Diocletian are generally considered to be dismal. The one text to treat the period in some detail is the already mentioned pamphlet by Lactantius, *De mortibus persecutorum*, a text that is tarnished by strong biases against emperors who persecuted Christians, or in any way opposed Constantine. It mimics the format of an “emperor catalogue,” a genre of historical writing that includes *De caesaribus* by Aurelius Victor and the *Breviarium*

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Duncan-Jones 1974: 260-261 nn. 4-5; 264-265; for Antioch, Downey 1958; for Ephesus, a summary of arguments is presented by Trebilco 2007: 17 n. 36.

of Eutropius, satirized by the emperor Julian in *Caesars*.<sup>17</sup> These texts offer bits of information on the reign, but little of depth, and often drawn from the same sources. The account of Ammianus for the period is lost, while the *Historia Augusta* treats the accession of Diocletian as its end point. Eusebius treats mainly the persecutions, and later Christian authors preserve a hostile view of the reign, while little survives of the positive tradition that at one point existed. Snippets are to be found in later sources such as the chronicle of John Malalas, but the only later account to add significantly to our knowledge of the period is Zosimus' *New History*.<sup>18</sup>

Beyond historical writing the source situation is less bleak; in fact, some of the most remarkable texts to survive from antiquity derive from the period. Among them are several panegyrics to emperors preserved in the collection of a 4<sup>th</sup> c. Gallic orator.<sup>19</sup> Such texts have not as a rule survived to modern times; the Diocletianic examples are the earliest to do so since Pliny's two centuries earlier, which itself has only come down to posterity through its inclusion in the same volume, as the cherished model. Also dating to the period is the handbook by Menander on how to compose such panegyrics.<sup>20</sup> Another rare source is a papyrus scroll from Panopolis in Egypt containing the correspondence of an imperial bureaucrat, providing much information on the routine administration of the region.<sup>21</sup> The epigraphic record for the period is

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<sup>17</sup> Lactantius, *De mort.* (ed. Creed 1984); Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* (ed. Bird 1994); Eutropius, *Breviarium* (ed. Müller 1995); Julian, *Caesars* (ed. Wright 1913 or. 10).

<sup>18</sup> John Malalas, *Chron.* (ed. Thurn 2000); Zosimus, *Hist. nov.* (ed. Paschould 1971). That a benign portrayal of the reign existed is clear from the way Carinus is reviled in the *Historia Augusta*; SHA *Carus, Carinus and Numerianus* (ed. Magie 1932). On surviving traces of this tradition, Bleckmann 1999: 207-8. Diocletian, *auctor imperii* of Constantine, appears to have been much respected still under Constantius II; he represented undeniable authority, drawn upon for legitimacy; see Schlange-Schöningen 2004 on 4th c. reception of Diocletian's government.

<sup>19</sup> For the Latin Panegyrics, Nixon & Saylor Rodgers, eds. 1995.

<sup>20</sup> For Menander Rhetor, Russell & Wilson, eds. 1981.

<sup>21</sup> For the Panopolis scrolls, Skeat, ed. 1964.

quite rich. The longest and arguably most remarkable inscription from antiquity is the Prices Edict, preserved in fragments of more than 40 copies, and it was not the only edict so posted.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the two legal codes mentioned above have preserved more rescripts by Diocletian (1200+) than by any other emperor.<sup>23</sup>

For long, Diocletian and his reign were not a favored subject by historians, for two main reasons: Christian sentiments spoke against him (and also made for poor sources), as did his proactive ruling style, involvement of the state in local affairs seen by many as negative by default. It is significant that Gibbon was rather positive to Diocletian, describing him as a skillful bureaucrat with vanity his one great flaw, and also that Jacob Burckhardt with his pro-elite perspective, resented him, seeing an extension of bureaucracy as harassment. These two may represent two persistent strains in the historiography on Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, formulated around the question of inventiveness: did his ruling style represent radical innovation, or pragmatic adaptation to current needs? Gibbon described him as able to identify problems and attend to them effectively, following in essence the account of Aurelius Victor, who showed grudging admiration for Diocletian's competence. 19<sup>th</sup> c. scholars, by contrast, reviled him for his very readiness to act, as illustrated by the term invented to cover the period he was seen to inaugurate: the "dominate."<sup>24</sup> Diocletian and his peers were portrayed as obsessed with power,

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<sup>22</sup> For the Prices Edict, Giaccherio 1974; Lauffer 1971. A summary of the fragments of the Prices Edict (and other imperial pronouncements), Feissel 1995 and 1996, and Crawford 2006. For a discussion, Corcoran 2000: 178-9 and 205-233. It was published between November 20 and December 9 in 301. See also Lactantius *De mort.* 7.6-7. For the edict on taxation circulated by Aristius Optatus: *P. Cair. Isid.* 1.2, included in the reply to a petition given on March 20, 297. A date of the original edict to 287 has been suggested by some (e.g. Carrié 1994, followed by Bransbourg 2008), which would put it in the Dyarchy.

<sup>23</sup> On the codes, extensively, Corcoran 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Burckhardt 1853. On his views and followers, Leppin 2006.

attempting to implement a totalitarian system of perfect symmetry, headed by identical, militaristic rulers descended from gods. The tendency to innovate is emphasized, with “new” understood as bad. Most who describe the Diocletianic administration as inventive are hostile to it, not infrequently seeing it as impotent in spite of its wide claims, critically overestimating the abilities of central government and relying on pomp rather than competence. It is with unmistakable glee that the Prices Edict is seen to fail, the fate awaiting all over-ambitious measures. This perspective is by no means dead; a late defender is Alexander Demandt, who describes the state as ruling through fear and force, the new bureaucracy an “iron corset” aimed at coercing the subjects into submission.<sup>25</sup> Many later scholars, while more positive to Diocletian’s rule, still underline newness, explaining what is seen as a complete, and willed, break with previous practices with the extraordinary personality of Diocletian himself.<sup>26</sup>

A more pragmatic image of his tenure was introduced by William Seston in 1949, in harmony with Gibbon’s view and using a range of materials beside textual sources and monuments. He sought to tone down intentionality in favor of *Realpolitik*, portraying an emperor who addressed issues as they arose rather than attempted to impose a system.<sup>27</sup> That the policies of Diocletian should be seen not as radical interventionism but as necessary responses to a

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<sup>25</sup> Demandt 1997 and 2004. Potter 2004: 295 sees a control-freak behind the new law codes, Diocletian’s lawyers as “radicals” seeking to bring a “new order to the system of justice.”

<sup>26</sup> So Kuhoff 2004: 17-8: “Dieses ungewöhnliche Herrschaftssystem wurde von der prägenden Kraft Diokletians geschaffen und von der Antike bis in die Jetztzeit zusammen mit der Abdankung als eine singuläre Erfindung dieses Kaisers angesehen.” Leppin 2006: 27-8 styles the intentionalists as the ones relying on “remains” rather than “tradition” and who treat Diocletian as a positive figure, while the reactivists (read Barnes) are hostile and rely on Lactantius.

<sup>27</sup> Seston 1946, esp. 353-4; supported by Lepelley 1999a: 633. In favor of continuities rather than innovation, Kolb 2001 and 2004, although earlier arguing for creativity (e.g. 1997: 35-7).



difficult situation has become an increasingly widespread position.<sup>28</sup> This so-called “reactivist” perspective has been much defended by Timothy Barnes, whose seminal *The New Empire of Diocletian and Constantine* was published in 1982, to be followed by a renewed interest in the period, seen also in Stephen Williams’ *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* from 1985. Frank Kolb defended the “intentionalist” position, although much updated, in 1987 in *Improvisation oder Experiment in der Organisation monarchischer Herrschaft?*<sup>29</sup> The main issue to divide the field has been the formation of the imperial college of four, described as an “experiment” by Kolb who sees it as a revolutionary step, the product of Diocletian’s mind, while reactivists such as Barnes point to continuities and inconsistencies in the imperial titulature that suggest the system may have been an *ad hoc* creation. This debate, as the related one of how power was distributed within the college (essentially, whether the Tetrarchy was a masked monarchy, a position favored by Mommsen), illustrates what permeates nearly all research on the period, in history as well as art history: a strong focus on the persons of the emperors.<sup>30</sup> As important as

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<sup>28</sup> So Williams 1985, presenting Diocletian as the one who salvages the Roman empire from complete fragmentation. Even Demandt accepts that the reforms were effective, though blaming these harsh medicines for destroying the empire in the long run. That a hands-on state may not have been considered a bad thing by all ancient observers is increasingly recognized; see e.g. chapters 2-3 in Garnsey & Humfress 2001, laying out the standard narrative of extension of bureaucracy but recasting it as progress. Porena 2003: 9 blames the traditional, monolithic view of Diocletian on the senatorial lens provided by ancient historians.

<sup>29</sup> See also Kolb 1997, 2001 and 2004. In later years, he has painted a more pragmatic image of Diocletian’s ruling style, stressing continuities as much as inventions.

<sup>30</sup> Corcoran 2000: 266-271 argues that the senior emperor was the only one to have legislative competence. That ancient observers saw the system as, if not a monarchy, at least strongly dependent on the authority of Diocletian, is suggested by the treatment in Julian’s *Caesars* 315 (transl. Wright 1913), where the co-emperors walk apart from him: “Next Diocletianus advanced in pomp, bringing with him the two Maximiani and my grandfather Constantius. These latter held one another by the hand and did not walk alongside of Diocletianus, but formed a sort of chorus round him. And when they wished to run before him as a bodyguard he prevented them, since he did not think himself entitled to more privileges than they;” see also *Or.* 1 to

these questions are, however, it is not of great consequence for my study whether policy was conceived by one, four or even an anonymous collective of minds – my interest lies in the content of said policy, and how it was applied.

Issues such as these have increasingly come to the fore since the 80's, and the period has continued to attract a small but steady share of scholarly attention. Two issues of *Antiquité Tardive* (vol. 2 and 3, both 1993) were dedicated to it, and more recently two ambitious German volumes which focus on imperial ideology and self-representation.<sup>31</sup> The useful (and massive) monograph by Wolfgang Kuhoff should also be mentioned, gathering a vast array of materials.<sup>32</sup> A fresh edition of the Latin Panegyrics with historical commentary was published by C. E. V. Nixon and Barbara Saylor Rodgers in 1995, was followed by Roger Rees' *Layers of Loyalty in Latin Panegyrics, AD 289-307* in 2002, who also published one of few syntheses of the period, *Diocletian and the Tetrarchy*, in 2004, brief but balanced and appending a multitude of original sources in good translations. Pat Southern treats the period in some detail in *The Roman Empire from Severus to Constantine* from 2001, following the reactivist perspective of Barnes and with a strong focus on military matters, as does David Potter in *The Roman Empire at Bay* from 2004. Overarching narratives are few; apart from the German volumes and those of Rees, few works treat the period in comprehensive fashion but most focus on one aspect of it, such as monuments, or law; there is no surge of biographies on Diocletian and his peers comparable to the one seen for Constantine. Whether one prefers to see Diocletian as the head of a military junta or a gifted

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Constantius II. Honoré 1994, by contrast, argues that Maximian was an independent legislator, and Pasqualini 1979 that he was at liberty to raise imperial structures.

<sup>31</sup> Demandt *et al.* 2004; Boschung & Eck 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Kuhoff 2001.

bureaucrat, he cuts a rather dull figure compared to the contradictory persona of the pious, vicious, and glorious Constantine. The period also suffers from liminality – works on the High Empire tend to end with 284, while those on Late Antiquity often begin with Constantine, or skim over Diocletian's reign briefly in search for precursors to later developments.

### *The 3<sup>rd</sup> c. and the “crisis”*

The reign of Diocletian is rarely treated in relation to what occurred before it, other than as the moment of resurrection for the Roman Empire after its long period of darkness. Depending on one's position on the issue of ruling style, Diocletian's government tends to be described as either salvaging the empire or destroying it, by introducing measures were detrimental in the long run.<sup>33</sup> Most scholars would however agree that his reign at least in the short term saw the end of a long row of troubles: the vicious cycle of usurpations ended, the recurrent civil strife at Rome abated, the coinage was stabilized, the Sassanian threat was put to rest and the integrity of the empire's borders remained secure.<sup>34</sup> There is far less agreement on the so-called “3rd c. crisis” itself, an issue that has been hotly debated in the last two decades, resulting in ambitious publications in a number of languages.<sup>35</sup> Against the established idea of an all-encompassing

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<sup>33</sup> For Diocletian *et al.* as saviors, e.g. Williams 1985, *passim*; Porena 2003: 137; Potter 2004: 296-7 quoting an inscription which presents Diocletian and his government as restorers of the world, which he crossreads with the panegyrics.

<sup>34</sup> Williams 1985. Also Porena 2003: 22, 74. The end of the cycle of praetorian prefects donning the purple came with the murder of Aper by Diocletian while campaigning under Numerianus. For a description of the mechanisms that brought generals to usurp in the 3rd c., see the introductory chapter in Watson 1999. See also Potter 2004, whose narrative is opposed to that of Watson – the former blames the turmoil on lack of central control, the latter on too much of it.

<sup>35</sup> Although the idea of global “crisis” had been questioned earlier (e.g. by Watson), a more focused debate was sparked by Christian Witschel (Witschel 2004), arguing against the notion of complete structural collapse as championed in particular by Geza Alföldy. Ambitious volumes

bath of steel which transformed the empire beyond recognition, a multitude of new perspectives have been offered, underlining continuities and insisting on the need to treat themes and regions separately. Against these “revisionists,” “catastrophists” defend the view of global disaster. I am by no means a radical revisionist, and in general I accept that the 3rd c. brought momentous challenges for the Roman empire. In many aspects, I adhere to the established narrative, at least as far as concerns the instability of central authority and the recurrent threats to the integrity of the empire. That said, much nuance and relevant new questions have been brought to the table by the “revisionists.” As an analytical tool, “crisis” can easily lead to circular argumentation; the epigraphic record of North Africa has been brought to bear on the issue in ways that are not entirely supportable, which will be dealt with in some detail in Chapter II. For instance, low frequencies of building inscriptions are taken as proof of economic downturn and despair, while phrases invoking the ruined state of buildings are quoted to show that the towns and their elites had taken a serious turn for the worse, even though both phenomena have other explanations, and are by no means unique to the 3rd c. Fluctuations in the “epigraphic habit” are consistently ignored. The same is to some extent the case for pottery data from Africa, treated in an article by Elizabeth Fentress, Bruce Hitchner and Philip Perkins, where they question its relevance as

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devoted to the “3rd c. crisis” have since emerged from Dutch, German and French scholarly circles. The first major contribution is the French, edited by Marie-Hélène Quet (Quet, ed. 2006). It was followed by a workshop dedicated to the subject in honor of Lukas de Blois (Hekster, de Kleijn, Slootjes 2007). While articles in the former tend to keep an open mind on the issue, the majority of the contributions in the latter defend the validity of the “crisis” position, in particular the article by Wolf Liebeschuetz. Hendrik Dey provides a summary of the debate in his review of this volume (*JRA* 23.2: 643-7). Finally a two-volume German publication on the subject was issued in 2008 (Johne *et al.* 2008).

material proof of “crisis.”<sup>36</sup> Although I have refrained from pronouncing a position on the matter in general, for the region of North Africa chosen for this study, I have found “transformation” to be a better description of events than “rupture,” as will be treated further below.

### *Administration*

A field of study which favors a pragmatic view of both the 3rd c. and the reign of Diocletian is administration, of particular interest to my study as an area of direct contact between ruler and subject. Scholarship on administration tends to rely less on historical narrative, and more on documentary and legal sources, at times also archaeological finds such as seals or military diplomas. Significant advances have been made in later years, not least by Simon Corcoran on law, Jean-Michel Carrié, Gilles Bransbourg and Colin Adams on taxation, and Daniëlle Slootjes and Pierfrancesco Porena on the development of the Late Roman bureaucracy.<sup>37</sup> The ground was laid for the latter by the works of François Jacques, André Chastagnol and Michel Christol on the prosopography of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c and 4<sup>th</sup> c., showing far more continuity of families and offices from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. into the 4<sup>th</sup> than had previously been assumed.<sup>38</sup> Another area that has revealed continuities rather than breaks is imperial titulature, treated by Klaus Maresch who points to caution and continuity on the part of Diocletian, adopting titles and epithets already coined rather

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<sup>36</sup> Fentress *et al.* 2004, using a slew of North African survey material to show that neither export production nor settlement increase came to a halt. Dossey 2010 argues that the material shows an increase of wealth on the part of the farming population rather than of settlement density. Either interpretation represents a challenge to the idea of a population in despair.

<sup>37</sup> Corcoran 2000, 2004 and 2006; Carrié 1994; Bransbourg 2008; Adams 2004, 2010; Slootjes 2006; Porena 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Jacques 1985; Chastagnol 1982; Christol 1997; see also 1984.

than occasioning a fundamental shift in the framing of the emperors. Few victory titles were in use, and no divine epithets occur beyond those that had long been established.<sup>39</sup>

It may perhaps come with the territory that most works focusing on the administration of the empire adhere to the pragmatic viewpoint, seeing that they study the government at work, not its conception. The view of Diocletian's administration as a monolithic state machinery has tended to dissolve with a closer examination of its measures. This is the case for the territorial divisions, perhaps the most intrusive of the policies attributed to Diocletian. The idea that the empire as such became divided was abandoned already by Chastagnol, and many after him have stressed its continued integrity, at least until the sons of Constantine were in power.<sup>40</sup> The division into four administrative districts was, according to Porena, a consequence of practical maintenance, and not evident until the civil wars of 306-13.<sup>41</sup> He has also labored to show how the new province and diocese arrangements were implemented in stages, and motivated by regional particulars, and do not represent a unified policy. He sees the idea that they were as a remnant of an obsolete type of scholarship on the reign of Diocletian, treating the administrative

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<sup>39</sup> Maresch 2006. The *devotus numini maiestatique eius* formula had more than a century on its back and was routinely applied when imperial officials dedicated to emperors. Instances when locals address emperors as *deus* are more common under Caracalla. Fishwick 1991 argues that the appeal to the emperors as *numina*, or as *deus* or *θεός*, is a characteristic of the reign of Caracalla and not much in evidence earlier. Examples are plentiful; Fishwick offers *CIL* 6.1080 from *Tusculum*. I would add an African example where he is called *deus noster* (*CIL* 8.5329).

<sup>40</sup> Chastagnol 1982: 95; so also Kolb 1997: 42-3; Bleckmann 1999: 226; Potter 2004: 283, quoting *Pan. Lat.* 10 (2) 9.4. Corcoran 2000: 135-6 on a legal query sent from Africa consulting Diocletian, even though the "eastern" emperor. Offenders were to be sent to mines in Palestine.

<sup>41</sup> Porena 2003: 136-8 sums up the position: "Non c'è dubbio, invece, che Diocleziano e Massimiano considerassero l'impero come un'unità, territoriale e ideale, indivisibile, allo stesso modo in cui potevano averlo cocepito, trent'anni prima, Valeriano e Gallieno, con i loro Cesari, e, dopo di loro, i *restitutores* Illirici."

reforms as a shock sprung from the audacious mind of an interventive prince.<sup>42</sup> The geometric description of the empire, divided in four sections each with its own emperor, capital, and tutelary deity, has been questioned on a number of points, not least that there are too many capitals to fit the bill.<sup>43</sup>

The image produced by writers on the Diocletianic administration at times appears almost opposite to the older one of a rigid system, ill fitted to reality. Simon Corcoran, in his works on the legal codes, portrays Diocletian as a competent – and unusually accessible – ruler. Instead of introducing new elements, he assumed a conservative stance in his rescripts, often quoting the decisions of previous emperors – the novelty lay instead in their collection and publication.<sup>44</sup> New is also the increased number of officials through the multiplication of governors, provided with expert staff.<sup>45</sup> According to Corcoran (and many before him), this measure was largely reactive, a response to the mounting need for jurisdiction in the wake of the *Constitutio*

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<sup>42</sup> Porena 2003: 9, 153.

<sup>43</sup> Kuhoff 2001: 382 lists a number of imperial residences beyond the “canonical” Milan, Trier, Nicomedia, Sirmium, Thessaloniki and Antioch (which already exceed four), including London, Mogontiacum, Tarraco, Serdica, Aquileia, as well as Alexandria and Carthage. He maintains that Rome was still nominally the capital. Duval 1997: 135-6 doubts that the term “capital” is relevant for the reign of Diocletian, arguing for seeing these towns as regional administrative centers. The emperors are also active in each other’s areas; for instance, Galerius and Diocletian tend to dwell in the same quadrant, according to the itineraries provided by Barnes 1982.

<sup>44</sup> Published in 292 and 295 respectively, they contain legal rescripts of emperors, most of them (more than 1,200) by Diocletian himself, vastly outnumbering those of any other emperor. The Gregorian Code contains rescripts from Hadrian to Diocletian, the Hermogenian exclusively by Diocletian from 293 and 294. No later emperor repeats the endeavor; the 290’s are the “high water mark for private rescripts.” The names of the codes represent clerks in the imperial administration who produced them on imperial initiative, if in rather independent fashion.

<sup>45</sup> On the new bureaucrats, and in particular the transformation of the office of governor in Late Antiquity, see vol. 6 of *Antiquité Tardive* and Slootjes 2006.

*Antoniniana*.<sup>46</sup> The codes were meant as guidelines, created to stamp out ambiguities and provide authoritative and uniform tools for the use of the new governors, which would be particularly helpful when dealing with populations that had little previous experience of the Roman legal system (and governors who had little experience of administering justice).<sup>47</sup> If these measures can be described as addressing a preexisting situation, the posting of edicts, on the other hand, was proactive. Corcoran describes the edicts as a sign of change of direction in jurisdiction, from petition-response to unsolicited action from above.<sup>48</sup> The image of the reign of Diocletian that emerges from scholarship on administration in some ways comes across as a middle road between the two strands outlined above. It allows for more subtlety and flexibility on the part of the government, making use of an established set of tools and bringing to completion tendencies traceable at least since Septimius Severus, while in other respects it showed considerable inventiveness.<sup>49</sup> That the Prices Edict and the persecutions of Manichaeans and Christians were unusually ambitious projects is not to be doubted. Another far-aiming policy, and one that appears to have brought much controversy at the time, is the restructuring of the tax system, compounded with at least one census. It is known from an edict that survives

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<sup>46</sup> So Corcoran, but also Porena 2003: 566 ties it to developments set in motion by 212: “Il programma che era stato di Caracalla, di rendere tutti gli uomini liberi dell'impero cittadini romani, veniva portato alle massime conseguenze da Diocleziano. Egli trasformò quei cittadini romani in sudditi a stretto contatto e sotto il controllo dell'amministrazione centrale per mezzo della diffusione capillare dei governatori di provincia, ormai alla guida di compagini territoriali molto ridotte e facilmente controllabili. Ai *provinciales* egli chiese e da essi pretese un'energica collaborazione nella difesa dell'impero romano.”

<sup>47</sup> Corcoran 2000: 41-2; Slootjes 2006: 47-50 on the lack of legal training on the part of governors, admitting that this is no less the case during the earlier Empire.

<sup>48</sup> Corcoran 2000: 198-202.

<sup>49</sup> On continuities, e.g. Tuori 2006, who claims the professionalization of the legal process and imperial monopoly on legal initiatives was a characteristic of Hadrian, with salaried officials replacing the old magistracies; Porena 2003: 70 on forerunners to multiple rulerships; Maresch 2006 on continuity in imperial titulature.



from Egypt, and may perhaps be traceable in a series of inscriptions from outlying parts of Syria which record land measurements. That the new system represented heavier dues is rejected by many today; the novelty lies instead in how the burden was to be distributed, assessment tied directly to units of land and numbers of heads in what appears to be an attempt at more equitable (and more effective) extraction.<sup>50</sup> The word “equitable” appears frequently in accounts of Diocletian’s administrative policies, and may serve to illustrate how this area of research has encouraged positive statements on the reign, reinterpreting the proactive stance as better serving the needs of the population than the less involved emperors of the principate.<sup>51</sup> One of the most enthusiastic is Porena, who in his concluding remarks states that the choice of Carinus’ soldiers to defect to Diocletian has “been shown by history to be justified by his great organizational abilities and his profound devotion to the Roman empire, which always characterized the government of this sovereign.”<sup>52</sup> That a rhetoric existed that framed the government as the defender of the everyman is clear from a number of sources for administration, and a proactive attitude is consciously broadcast as part of this image. That this rhetoric should be taken at face value may perhaps be doubted, as does Adams, as well as Sootjes, who notes that it becomes

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<sup>50</sup> On the tax reform, Adams 2004 and 2010. Porena 2006: 9 tones down the effect and the contention of taxation of Italy. Ziche 2006:129-130, 136 claims there was no fiscal mayhem, and that literary complaints about taxation are cliché, and by no means confined to late antiquity. He argues against the model of high tax-high expense, and agrees with Carrié 1993a (also, 1993b, 1994) that the tax levels remained stable at least until Justinian. Bransbourg 2008, though treating the tax reform as an attempt to create a more equitable and transparent mechanism for extraction, argues that it had severe adverse effects on municipal finances, serving rather to enrich the aristocrats whom it was designed to keep at bay.

<sup>51</sup> For instance, Kehoe 2007: 166 uses the word twice in his assessment of the tax reform.

<sup>52</sup> Porena 2003: 564. Even more optimistic is Ermatinger 1996, who repeatedly hails Diocletian for his great “altruism.”

routine for Late Antique emperors and governors.<sup>53</sup> The changing position of the governors in Late Antiquity is a subject that has come into focus in later years, changes which have their root in the province divisions by Diocletian. Apart from a monograph by Slootjes, a volume of *Antiquité Tardive* was dedicated to the subject.<sup>54</sup> The position of the Diocletianic governors will be dealt with in chapter V.2, where I discuss how the building inscriptions may be relatable to how some of the administrative reforms were designed and communicated.

### *Art and architecture*

Another point of contact between government and subject is imperial art, on which two discussions have a bearing on this study: the first, what was being communicated, the second, by whom. Imperial art has always played a significant role in accounts of Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, due in part to the state of the historical sources, but also to the idiosyncratic nature of the material itself, most famously the porphyry portraits with their striking features and poses.<sup>55</sup> In fact, imperial art provided the basis for the division between the “principate” and the “dominate” in German scholarship.<sup>56</sup> The discussion has tended to revolve around the same issues as the historical debates, primarily concerned with the persons of the emperors in a manner parallel to the division between “intentionalists” and “reactivists.” The first position was formulated by Paul Zanker in his work on Augustus, seeing imperial imagery as a means to consciously promulgate an ideology. Monarchy, it is argued, had a strong effect on imagery, and

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<sup>53</sup> Slootjes 2006: 57.

<sup>54</sup> Slootjes 2006; *AntTard* 6, 1998.

<sup>55</sup> For treatments of Tetrarchic portraiture, Delbrueck 1932; Bergmann 1977; Baratte 1995, Smith 1996 and 1997, Meischner 2001; Boschung 2006.

<sup>56</sup> Kuhoff 2001: 329.

analogies are frequently drawn with 20<sup>th</sup> c. dictators.<sup>57</sup> For Diocletian and the Tetrarchy, this had led to a focus on what the emperors *are*: divine, multiple, distant, bejeweled, and/or iron-fisted generalissimos.<sup>58</sup> Most such arguments revolve around interventiveness, and in particular the need to promote the “Tetrarchic experiment” to a, supposedly, skeptical citizenry.<sup>59</sup> However, that a concept expected to be unwelcome was ever consciously broadcast as imperial propaganda is, I believe, open to question. A more fruitful approach is to consider what virtues the imagery was meant to project, and to what audiences these would have particularly appealed. Marianne Bergmann and Bert Smith have interpreted the stiff features and staring eyes as a means to communicate strength and watchfulness, the furrowed brow as expressing experience – a focus not on what the emperor *is*, but what he *does*. Choosing to appear as four would quadruple their forces, exploiting ideas of imminent presence (as does the almost superhuman speed with which Tetrarchic emperors are often associated) as well as cosmic connotations of the number. For instance, it was consciously applied to present the emperors as active at all compass points; it has even been suggested that Maximian participated in the African campaign simply to make this possible.<sup>60</sup> The imagery thus stresses service: the emperors are presented as relentless in their commitment to the guardianship of the realm, and as well qualified to take on this duty

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<sup>57</sup> Zanker 1990. Also Gros 1988, featuring articles by F. Coarelli, H. von Hesberg, T. Hölscher and P. Zanker. For modern analogies, Scriba 1995; Horster 2001: 1-2.

<sup>58</sup> Demandt 1997 speaks of threatening starkness and harsh frontality, while Boschung 2006 calls their portrait images overweening, doused in oriental *luxuria*. Bianchi Bandinelli 1971: ch. 1 first formulated the idea of an “age of anxiety” shining through the late antique portraiture.

<sup>59</sup> Thiel 2006 is much in favor of broadcasting the number four, suggesting that the enormous pillar in the Serapeum of Alexandria had three companions (on very slight argumentation). Von Hesberg 2006 is also occupied with the concept, as is Eck 2006 and Boschung 2006 in the same volume, which treats communicating this idea as the main concern for the state. The concept is invariably described as unwelcome, especially among the troops.

<sup>60</sup> For the campaign, see below n. 75-6, as well as p. 40, n. 87.

through their great personal qualities, their omnipresence, and friends in high places. If this general idea is correct, rather than impressing the validity of the rule of four on soldiers and subjects by scaring them into submission, the imagery was meant to reassure and inspire loyalty; a complete reversal of the traditional view. Moreover, none of these virtues were novel, nor was exploiting the number four; they belong to what had by then long since become the standard repertoire for imperial art. As with the rhetoric that surrounded administrative matters, the novelty lies less in the content of Diocletianic imperial art than in how it was applied.

The second debate concerns conception and directionality – was imperial art promulgated from central quarters, or produced by locals in an attempt to communicate their loyalty to the emperors? It was brought to bear on monuments raised under Diocletian by Emanuel Mayer in 2002 in *Rom ist dort, wo der Kaiser ist*, where he took issue with the idea of a state propaganda machinery. He instead transferred the initiative to the locals, using panegyrics as a model for how the imagery came to represent their expectations on the emperors as much as centrally endorsed virtues. Others go further still in their ambition to place the agency with those “below,” reading the monuments didactically, as precepts for how the emperors ought to behave.<sup>61</sup> As necessary as it was to question the notion of a well-oiled propaganda machinery, there are problems with the opposing views as well. For one, while some features of imperial art are likely tempered by local circumstances, others appear simultaneously in all provinces in a manner that cannot easily have been spontaneous, but must have emanated from a central source.<sup>62</sup> It appears

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<sup>61</sup> So Marlow 2006. In my view, this didactic reading of imperial monuments allows for too much sophistication in the conception of imperial art, which was a more routine affair.

<sup>62</sup> It appears the “panegyric milieu” that created this compromise between locals and emperors is only present at Rome – in the provinces, as seen in part 2 of Meyer’s work, the emperors are free to “express their might.” The author never questions that they wish to do so, or why.

differentiation is required, treating some categories of art as more informed by local initiatives than others. Another issue concerns audience, and stems from the common use of panegyrics in interpreting Diocletianic monuments, which is misleading in its insistence that these were aimed at the emperors themselves.<sup>63</sup> Of many brands of imperial art, the emperors were likely neither authors or audience, as I will argue in chapter III, but a symbol used in communications between others, and involving the persons of the emperors only indirectly. Rather than a monolithic and radically new imperial ideology broadcast through images meant to overawe the public, or expressions of loyalty to the emperor by local elites, I would see a different set of mechanisms in operation. Imperial imagery from Augustus onward, though centrally conceptualized, was employed mainly by local agents and aiming at local audiences. Under Diocletian, thus, a routinely produced imperial imagery communicated virtues that had become standard during the 3rd c. As before, it was employed in a number of ways by a range of agents, local and imperial both, and was aimed at local audiences, not the emperors. What is new is how it was employed by the imperial bureaucracy, as will be treated in chapter IV.2 and V.2.

If the imperial art of the period has generated fruitful discussion, imperial construction leaves much to be desired in this regard. A study on public works in the provinces during the period has to my mind never been conducted, nor has imperial building activity been compared to that of locals. Scholarship on architecture associated with the reign of Diocletian has suffered from the same top-heavy perspective as the other disciplines, with imperial monuments and the

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<sup>63</sup> It should be recognized that panegyrics and imperial monuments do not represent the same process, the one designed for a single occasion and not aimed at publication, the other by default permanent. The panegyrics are used by art historians in a highly selective fashion, choosing to focus on the more esoteric parts, and neglecting a lacuna of almost two centuries – we simply do not know when the changes between the panegyric delivered to Trajan by Pliny and the earliest late antique example to be preserved, that to Maximian in 289, occurred.

so-called palaces receiving the lion's share of attention.<sup>64</sup> Interpretations have concerned some of the same themes as portraiture, with a strong emphasis on ceremonial aspects.<sup>65</sup> The complexes at Split and Gamzigrad are the most famous (and the only ones to be well preserved), with variously well studied comparanda at Sirmium, Thessaloniki, Nicomedia, Antioch, Aquileia, Trier and Milan. Questions have concerned what term to apply, whether "palace," which emphasizes the role of capital of the towns in question, or "imperial (or governor's) residence." A connected issue concerns typology – whether a set of architectural features with the Palatine complex as model were reproduced in the provinces, and meant to be recognized as an official seat of imperial government. The two poles of the debate are represented by Slobodan Ćurčić, in favor, and Noël Duval, who rejected that any such category existed.<sup>66</sup> In this area, too, new perspectives are emerging, based on continuous work at Split and Gamzigrad. An economic rationale has come to the fore in both cases (wool production at Split; mining at Gamzigrad), raising new questions as to the priorities that informed them.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> As in the summary of Huskinson in *CAH* 12.2, p. 683, treating only residences and the arch of Galerius, and mentioning in passing the baths of Diocletian at Rome.

<sup>65</sup> Such as for the Aula Palatina at Trier, which sits squarely on the main road. Instead of seeing the hall as a means to increase contact between emperor and subject by providing a designated space for it – seeing that earlier the populace had no access to their ruler save in the arenas – it is treated as one of remove. Von Hesberg 2006 fills the hall with textiles and lamps and other paraphernalia to mystify the experience, and its anteroom is interpreted as a means to ritualize access. The recent discovery of Hadrianic auditoria by the Forum of Trajan, which had the same manner of entryways, should warn us that these were not an invention of later eras. Their main function was most likely to filter out sound from rooms meant for public speaking.

<sup>66</sup> Ćurčić 1993; Duval 1997, esp. 142-3, arguing against the existence of "palaces," or that the presence of an imperial residence constituted a "capital." To attempt to arrive at an answer on the issue of typology is complicated by the fact that the two remaining examples are heterogeneous in being retirement complexes, and neither a good fit with the Palatine model.

<sup>67</sup> For Split, see Nikšić 2011. For Gamzigrad, personal communication by Anne Hunnel Chen.

Buildings that are not imperial monuments or directly associated with the persons of the emperors have received little, if any, attention. Rome is the one good exception, where the brick studies by Herbert Bloch and Eva Margareta Steinby revealed an edilitarian activity beyond almost any other administration, leading to comprehensive treatments by Filippo Coarelli and Franz Alto Bauer, and Maxentian Rome has received a monograph by Mats Cullhed as well as a slew of articles.<sup>68</sup> Even so, the focus remains on structures as bearers of imperial ideology, with much discussion on the reliefs of the *Arcus Novus* and the *Decennalia/Vicennalia* monument, while less eloquent buildings have received far less attention. The Baths of Diocletian, the largest edifice ever raised in Rome (bar the walls) and more than twice the size of the entire Split complex, is surprisingly little studied.<sup>69</sup> Outside Rome, there is still less scholarship on structures other than palaces or monuments, and beyond a scatter of articles that treat specific structures or locations (most of them defenses), comprehensive treatments are lacking.<sup>70</sup> There are two main exceptions: the volume by Kuhoff mentioned above which presents a wealth of data but without in depth analysis, and the more focused monograph by Anna Pasqualini on imperial construction

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<sup>68</sup> Bloch 1974; Steinby 1986; Bauer 1996 and 2011; Coarelli 1999; Pasqualini 1979; Cullhed 1994. The knowledge of the importance of the reign of Maxentius for the urban development of Rome is entirely the product of brick studies.

<sup>69</sup> Fundamental on the arch, Laubscher 1976; on the Forum monument, Kähler 1964. Both accounts have since been much updated. On the curia, Morselli & Tortorici 1989; for the baths, Candilio 1998.

<sup>70</sup> Among examples are the Saxon shore installations (Johnson 1979) and the fort at Nag al-Hagar in Egypt (Mackensen 2009a), the Luxor complex (Kalavrezou-Maxeiner 1975), the colonnade and camp at Palmyra (Yon 2001), the *Strata Diocletiana* and forts in Syria (for a summary, Konrad 1999), and ornamental city gates in Gaul (Dey 2010b); among public works are a basilica at Pisidian Antioch (Christol & Drew-Bear 1999), the whole city centre at *Rapidum* (*CIL* 8.20836) and street grids redrawn in towns in Gaul (Heijmans 1998; Louis 2003); among infrastructure are a murex factory at *Aperlae* (Leadbetter 2006), a new road through Lucania (Buck 1971), the draining of the province *Valeria* (Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 40.10), and two dams in Syria mentioned in rabbinic texts (Ma'Oz 2006).

in the Western provinces.<sup>71</sup> Beyond showing that such activity was plentiful and widespread, she does not go into any depth about what motivated it; her main object is to associate the projects with Maximian, in order to show that he was at liberty to take initiatives within the political framework set up by Diocletian. The question of agency does not enter the picture; she never doubts that the buildings were the product of imperial minds, only which particular ones.<sup>72</sup> While her account is sober, the one study on construction in Africa under Diocletian by Gerhard Waldherr vastly overstates imperial involvement.<sup>73</sup> The discussion on imperial architecture as a means to broadcast an ideology has some of the same problems as that for imperial imagery. If some would overestimate the will (and ability) of the imperial government to make statements through architecture, others are too ready to deny that the state had any stake in it at all. The question whether an imperial “Baupolitik” ever existed has been raised by Marietta Horster, who accepts this only for the city of Rome. She demands that a project have been (explicitly) initiated, funded and completed by an emperor personally if it is to be considered “imperial.”<sup>74</sup> This excludes the option of discussing more routine handling of construction, which involved state officials in a range of functions (initiators, supervisors, authorizers), an activity informed by imperial policies in a more general sense while not primarily motivated by a wish to disseminate propaganda. The level of state involvement with the African projects, the intentionality, and the role played by imperial ideologies in their presentation will be discussed in chapter IV.

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<sup>71</sup> Pasqualini 1979.

<sup>72</sup> Pasqualini 1979: 121-123, 131.

<sup>73</sup> Waldherr 1989; see chapter IV p. 184. He is followed by Wolfgang Kuhoff, who for instance interprets the common use of the adjective *augustus* when dedicating to deities as imperial propaganda. Kuhoff 1993: 31ff.; see also 2006 for Africa.

<sup>74</sup> Horster 2001: 3-4 rejects an imperial “Baupolitik.” The ambiguities surrounding funding are brought up in chapter III; very few projects can be securely shown to have been paid by the emperor personally, while most involve contributions by locals, or tax revenue of the province.



### **I.3 Roman Africa: outline of geography, demography, history**

#### *Historic outline and debates*

The literature on Roman North Africa, as scholars working on the region repeatedly (and, alas, correctly) point out, is vast, and to have some hope of being able to work with it constructively I have had to focus my readings on issues that have a bearing on my subject, mainly urbanism, geography and economy. Even within these limited areas of research there are too many stories deserving to be told about Roman Africa to manage within the scope of a dissertation. The outline of history and historiography that I will present here makes no claim at being comprehensive, but serves as a background to the arguments to be laid out in the following chapters. The earliest periods, including the transition from Punic empire to Roman province and the first 150 years of Roman dominance, will only be treated summarily, seeing that my thesis treats phenomena that developed when Roman rule was long since firmly established, mainly during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries.

As one of only three emperors to visit the African provinces (discounting the first two Gordians who were elevated there), Maximian Herculius wintered at Carthage in 297-8 after finishing his campaign in the Mauretaniae, and built baths to celebrate his victory.<sup>75</sup> From Carthage, he sailed for Rome, where he celebrated his victory with a triumph and initiated another set of baths, adorned with multiple inscriptions that proudly announce that Maximian, in

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<sup>75</sup> His presence in Carthage on March 10 298 is known from a rescript sent from there (*Fragmenta Vaticana* 41). He may have conducted a second campaign against the *Laguantae* in Tripolitania in 298, only reported in one late source, Iohannes Corippus I 478-482. Rebuffat 1992: 373 accepts the campaign in the Syrtis. For the baths, see above n. 1.

presence, built them as he returned *ex Africa*.<sup>76</sup> To the Roman *plebs*, long accustomed to *annona* handouts, this had a meaning that went further than victory at war: it was equivalent to saying that he had secured the food supply. That Africa represented wealth to many ancient writers is known from innumerable passages, its rhetorical value seen for instance in the praise of Claudius Gothicus in the *Historia Augusta* for turning over the proceeds from his private African properties to public use. A standing epithet in later panegyrics is “powerful Africa,” likely referring to the grip it potentially had on Rome. The theme was not new – the nexus of grain exports, wealth, and power is a recurring theme in ancient literature on North Africa, seen for instance in the remark by Pliny the Elder (*NH* 18.35) that 6 senators owned half the province (and were executed for this reason by Nero). Not only Italian senators but Africans, too, were in a position to benefit from the surpluses produced in the region. Art historians have been occupied with the astoundingly rich record of mosaics from villas and baths along the coast, from Morocco to Benghazi.<sup>77</sup> More Africans entered the senate than from any other region outside of Italy; the Carthaginian nobility was deeply intervoven with the Italian, and remained in control of much of the resources of the province throughout the imperial period, by no means broken by the turmoils of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c.<sup>78</sup> The prosperity of Africa is also visible in the high number of intellectuals that it exported, from Suetonius to Augustine, and who more often than not received

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<sup>76</sup> The triumph is mentioned in *Pan. Lat.* 7.8.7. A triumph at Carthage has been suggested, but there is no record of one, and Rebuffat 1992: 371 remarks that he rather seems to have performed clerk duty on that day. Coins with *Adventus Augg. Nostrorum* were struck for him and Diocletian for the event (*RIC* VI 13b, 19b 25b, *RIC* 347), and also *Aucta Karthago* (*RIC* VI 421, 26-8). The baths at Rome and Carthage became the responsibility of the same man, *L. Helvius Aelius Dionysius*, serving as proconsul of Africa during Maximian’s visit and as urban prefect in 301-2.

<sup>77</sup> Most evident in the rich collection in the Bardo museum, but also *in situ* at locations such as *Villa Selene* (Zliten, Libya). See Dunbabin 1978.

<sup>78</sup> On Africans entering the senate, Pelletier 1964; see also Corbier 1982, and Ch II p. 115-6.

their education in towns other than Carthage, which shows that wealth did not accumulate only at the metropolis.<sup>79</sup> That much of it did is nevertheless clear, and the famous quote by Tertullian about the elegant, high-born and powerful Carthaginians deserves to be given in full:

“You Carthaginian men, always leaders of Africa, of old nobility and recent wealth, I rejoice that your circumstances are so fortunate that you have the time and desire to comment on dress. This leisure is the product of peace and of the *annona*. All is well both as provided by the empire and by the sky.”<sup>80</sup>

Tertullian hints at the source of these newfound riches: agrarian exports to feed Rome and the armies. From the earliest days of scholarship on Africa, the basis of this wealth has been under close scrutiny: the first expeditions that recorded antiquities were conducted by teams of military surveyors, motivated by a desire to imitate Roman era agricultural methods.<sup>81</sup> The focus on economy has remained strong to this day – patterns of production and distribution both of agrarian goods such as grain, oil and wine, manufactured goods such as textiles and ceramic finewares continue to attract the attention of archaeologists. To these should be added significant fishing industries, marbles, firewood, animals for the games, and slaves. Since by now half a century, a large share of this research has concerned the Late Roman period, increasingly regarded as the *floruit* for (at least most of) the African provinces. Pottery finds in Rome and Ostia, together with well identified typologies of Late Roman African finewares, brought the

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<sup>79</sup> Among examples are Suetonius (*Hippo Regius*), Fronto (*Cirta*), Apuleius (*Madauros*), and Aurelius Victor, from an undisclosed minor town. Tertullian and Nemesianus lived at Carthage, but Augustine came from *Thagaste* while Lactantius received his education at *Sicca Veneria*.

<sup>80</sup> Tertullian *De Pallio* 1.1: *Principes semper Africae, viri Carthaginenses, vetustate nobiles, novitate felices, gaudeo vos tam prosperos temporum, cum ita vacat ac iuvat habitus denotare. Pacis haec et annonae otia. Ab imperio et a caelo bene est* (ed. Hunink 2004). On interpreting *novitate felices* as recent wealth due to the *annona*, see Hugoniot 2006: 405.

<sup>81</sup> Johansson de Château 2009: 104-7 for a summary of early surveys of antiquities in North Africa, and their aims.

phenomenon to the attention of Carandini, who employed them as evidence of economic growth, and ever since, the example of North Africa has been used to counter minimalist perspectives on the Roman economy.<sup>82</sup>

Although this latter debate lies outside of the present study, it has been of great interest how economic developments may have affected the local social structure. The demography of the African economy has come increasingly to the fore through survey data, of which several have been conducted within my area.<sup>83</sup> In this regard, epigraphy has also played a significant role, as brought out in the works of Dennis Kehoe on the epigraphy of estates.<sup>84</sup> Basing his study on a sample of texts set up by sharecroppers which detail their terms of tenure, he contends that far from a downtrodden pauper, the African farmer (at least on imperial estates) had considerable means and independence, profiting from a dearth of labor force. As for the later period, Leslie Dossey has argued for a new visibility of farming communities, which she ties to an increase in prosperity for the farming population. This increase generated, she argues, resentment among the established elites, an opposition which eventually issued into the conflicts between Donatists and Catholics in the later 4<sup>th</sup> and early 5<sup>th</sup> c.

That she views these conflicts as based on class rather than ethnicity reflects a tendency in modern scholarship to tone down opposition between native groups and the Roman government. The intermittent troubles reported for the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. in the Mauretaniae and Western Numidia, as

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<sup>82</sup> Carandini 1970. For a bibliography on late Roman African pottery studies, see chapter V.1.

<sup>83</sup> Those of the areas of ancient *Cillium* (Hitchner 1988 and 1990) and *Segermes* (Dietz, Ladjimi Sebaï and Ben Hassen 1995), more recently *Thugga* (De Vos ed. 2000, not fully published) and *Leptiminus* (Stone, Stirling & Ben Lazreg 1998; Stone, Mattingly & Ben Lazreg 2011); for a summary of survey data, Fentress *et al.* 2004. An ongoing project of wider scope is the *Carte Nationale des Sites Archéologiques et des Monuments Historiques* (1998-), lead by Sadok Ben Baaziz and including surveys of the Sahel, the Tunisian High Steppe and Cap Bon.

<sup>84</sup> Kehoe 1988 and 2007, see also Ørsted 1993.

well as in Tripolitania, have been variously interpreted, but most observers tend to see them as periodic unrest rather than full scale revolts.<sup>85</sup> Andreas Gutsfeld describes them as skirmishes, followed by Michel Christol, who claims they were strictly localized.<sup>86</sup> The campaign of Maximian is frequently treated as something of a publicity stunt, exaggerated for effect and enabling the Tetrarchic emperors to pose as making war at all compass points.<sup>87</sup> Others still maintain that these conflicts represented serious challenges, if no longer for the most part described as directed against Roman dominion *per se*.<sup>88</sup> Issues of identity and Romanization have long been a major strand in African scholarship, often intertwined with economy. The development of the discussion can be traced by two of its landmarks, the publication of Marcel Bénabou's *La résistance africaine à la romanisation* (Paris 1976, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2005), where he identified African cultural traits that persisted through the Roman centuries and beyond, and Greg Woolf's *Becoming Roman; The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge

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<sup>85</sup> Including border conflicts in Tripolitania, intermittent troubles with the *Musulamii* in Central Numidia, and more serious conflicts in Mauretania Caesariensis, in the 240- 250's, with periodic outbreaks rather than continuous unrest. They are known from inscriptions at *Lambaesis* recording the feats of commanders (e.g., an often quoted dedication by *C. Macrinus Decianus* *CIL* 8.2615 = *ILS* 1194) and to assess their gravity is not straightforward, not least due to a tendency to exaggerate in the interest of self-glorification.

<sup>86</sup> Gutsfeld 2008; Christol 2003: 141-142, 157.

<sup>87</sup> It was certainly exploited on imperial monuments, e.g. the quadriportico at Autun, described by the orator Eumenius as displaying a painting of one emperor at war on each side. Maximian was replaced on a pillar monument at Ephesus by the general Theodosius, father of Theodosius I and famous for his Mauretanian campaign, likely to complete the geography (*Inschriften von Ephesos* II 305, 306). Among those who doubt the need for the emperor's presence at this one-season campaign, in an area recently pacified by its competent governor *Aurelius Litua*, is Rebuffat 1992: 375-367. The attribution to Diocletian of the fortification along the desert fringe, the *fossatum Africae*, known from aerial photography (Baradez 1949), has been called into doubt by Fentress 1979: 3, Napoli & Boniface 2000, and Johansson de Château 2009: 115-121. The withdrawal from Mauretania Tingitana securely established, Lepelley 1979: 15.

<sup>88</sup> E.g. Moderán 2003.

1998) where he argued that provincial elites Romanized not by coercion, but by choice.<sup>89</sup> His perspective has become dominant, and the extent to which the Berber and Punic populations in Africa saw themselves as Roman and took on a Roman *habitus* is seen by many scholars today as depending on opportunity. Elite individuals were fluent in both native and shared Mediterranean expressions, mobilized when useful, while village based farming populations had fewer cultural choices.<sup>90</sup> Tied to this issue is a debate regarding the meaning of the terms “Roman” and “native.” Colonial perspectives have plagued African scholarship from the outset, the early expeditions dating all finds to the Roman era in their assumption that Arabs were unable to produce anything comparable. Modern prejudices against Berber and Arab populations have been retrojected to antiquity through flawed dichotomies, involving a good deal of geophysical determinism.<sup>91</sup> This heritage has proven difficult to do away with or get around; even the very study of Africa has been deemed colonialist by the more hard-line scholars, mapping as an act of domination, and there is considerable disagreement on what terminology to apply. Should for instance “Roman North Africa” be replaced with “Maghreb”?<sup>92</sup> I have chosen to use the old term, where “Roman” signifies chronology, not culture. Issues of ethnicity and

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<sup>89</sup> The position was by no means new; an early advocate is Gasco 1972: 46-52, who argued that wealthy natives favored Roman names, laws, and social organization to gain an upper hand in the competition with neighbors.

<sup>90</sup> Fentress 2006 provides a thorough summary of the debate and also offers an elucidating comparative analysis based on present day embedded societies in the Kabylie mountains.

<sup>91</sup> For rising awareness of colonial issues in African scholarship, see esp. the *Annales* articles from 1978 (*AnnESC* 33.1) by Philippe Leveau and Yvon Thébert, and the response by Marcel Bénabou. For a recent summary of colonial perspectives in scholarship on African geography, demography and economy, Johansson de Château 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Johansson de Château 2009: 179 replaces “Romanization” with “creolization,” and prefers the term “Romano-Libyan” over “Roman.” “Creolization” is again rejected as being colonial by Hobson 2012: 9, favoring instead “discrepant experiences,” used by Mattingly 2010: 213-8. On the term *Maghreb*, preferred over “Roman North Africa,” Johansson de Château 2009: 32-35. I would argue that “Maghreb” is also an imperialist term, signifying the extent of Arab rule.

cultural identity will not play a significant part in my study, as such distinctions are rarely discernible in my material. Roman naming practices became increasingly dominant, supplanting native ones almost entirely by the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> c., and in the overwhelming majority of cases the record is too spotty for genealogies to be traced through more than a couple of generations.<sup>93</sup> The area to which I have limited my study was not troubled by ethnic disturbances during the period of study – in fact, not since Tacfarinas, and the one conflict to shake it was the revolt of the Gordians, which was not centered on ethnicity.<sup>94</sup> I will, however, deal to a considerable extent with class, which as mentioned is increasingly regarded as the main factor determining the options and outlook of African populations.

The central position in historical scholarship on Roman Africa has always been occupied by epigraphy. From the time of the earliest travelers and surveyors, it has been clear that the

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<sup>93</sup> Builders that can be securely identified as Berber or Punic are almost exclusively of 1st c. date. Exceptions do occur, such as *M. Barigbalus Ghuddis*, who added ornaments to a temple to Neptune at *Pheradi Maius* under Pius (*ILTun.* 246). The use of a *praenomen* together with his native names is however indicative of a general development toward the abandonment of non-Roman nomenclature (at least in publicly posted inscriptions). Aounallah & Maurin 2008: 230 established the non-Roman status of individuals at *Siviri* based on the use of such proto-Roman nomenclature. On the difficulty of tracing families over the *longue durée*, Corbier 1988: 189-190. She referred to the senatorial elite, but the same is no less true of lower social strata.

<sup>94</sup> Vespasian fought the Garamantes, and Domitian commanded that the Nasamones cease to exist (Dio Cassius, *Rom. Hist.* 67.4.6), but these dwelled far south and west of the area here studied. Krimi 2003: 24 on the *limes*, pacified under the Flavians after the encantonment of the *Musulamii*. Although the territory of the *Musulamii* reached the westernmost parts of my region, it appears to have been largely spared disturbances; Le Bohec 1986: 380-382 describes the 263-60 conflicts as contained in the west, at best reaching as far east as *Theveste*. Hoards from the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. found at *Calama* (Turcan 1963 for a hoard found in 1953, with bibliography to one found in 1846) suggest that this western town felt some disturbances. That said, *Sufetula*, a major town within the tribal canton, was never fortified. The Gordianic revolt is generally considered to have involved class rather than ethnicity, against Jacques 1980 who claimed that the rebelling *iuvenes* were not scions of aristocratic families, the farmers they mobilized not their dependents. Herodian *Hist.* 7.4-6 is however clear on these point. That said, Jacques is correct, I believe, in rejecting that the aim of Maximinus Thrax was specifically to destroy the senatorial order.

provinces of Roman Africa had an uncommonly vivid “epigraphic habit,” leaving thousands upon thousands of inscriptions to posterity.<sup>95</sup> The majority, as elsewhere, derive from tombs, but the dense urbanization in certain parts of the region has also generated a mass of inscriptions associated with municipal life, such as honorific statue bases, building inscriptions, records of legal proceedings, and border stones. This material has drawn the attention of historians, who see in the many municipalities – the “little Romes” as they are frequently called – an opportunity to study Roman institutions and elites in miniature format.<sup>96</sup> Together with Asia Minor and central Italy, North Africa has provided the bulk of evidence on which ideas of ancient euergetism are based, and arguments for its function, extent and survival through the later eras have frequently drawn on African inscriptions.<sup>97</sup> Pioneering works on the African provinces and their towns, their prosopography and bureaucracy have been offered by Hans-Georg Pflaum, Thomas. R. S. Broughton, Jacques Gascou, Michel Christol, and many more.<sup>98</sup> The towering figure in scholarship on the later periods is Claude Lepelley, whose works will be frequently cited in this

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<sup>95</sup> The identification of an “epigraphic habit” mainly derived from African material. For the main arguments, see MacMullen 1982, Meyer 1990, and Witschel 2006a. The enigma has yet to be resolved, but it is clear that the practice of inscribing in stone takes a dramatic downward turn at the end of the reign of Caracalla. Meyer’s argument that the practice of raising epitaphs was tied to the acquisition of Roman citizenship, and that it disappeared with the globalization of the franchise through the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, has been rejected. That the same decrease is notable also for building inscriptions strengthens this position.

<sup>96</sup> On African towns modeling their laws, institutions, lifestyle and culture on the example of Rome, Lepelley 1979: 12. Often quoted is Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 16.13, which describes how provincial colonies came across as tiny effigies of Rome.

<sup>97</sup> Seminal on euergetism is Paul Veyne’s *Le Pain et Cirque* (Paris 1975). For Africa, the studies by Richard Duncan-Jones set out the preliminaries, followed more recently by Gabriele Wesch-Klein (Duncan-Jones 1974; Wesch-Klein 1990).

<sup>98</sup> Some of the major works on the history of the African provinces and the development of their towns are Gsell 1913-29; Broughton 1929; Warmington 1954; Romanelli 1959; Pflaum 1978; Thomasson 1996. The latest historical syntheses are Briand-Ponsart & Hugoniot 2005; Duval 2006. On the administration of the towns, e.g. Poinssot 1962, Picard 1969-70), Kotula 1979 and 1985, Corbier 1982, Gascou 1972 and 2003, and Christol 2005, to name but a few.



study. It is fair to say that his dissertation publication *Les cités de l'Afrique romaine au Bas-Empire* (Paris 1979/1981) fundamentally changed the view of Africa in Late Antiquity in ways that no later scholar has been at liberty to ignore. His aim was to counter the then dominant pessimistic view of Late Antiquity, and demonstrate that there remained considerable wealth and vitality in the North African towns through the 4<sup>th</sup> c. and beyond. This view has since supported by archaeological data on both urban structures and economy, pointing to a remarkably dynamic development in the region.<sup>99</sup> Lepelley put the spotlight on how towns persisted in engaging in a range of municipal activities, independent, and, as it seems, doing quite well. Lepelley argued that the impact of the troubles of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. was not nearly as critical as it appears to have been in other regions, and proposed that North Africa should be seen as an “island of prosperity” in a sea of crisis.<sup>100</sup> Since then, Africa has been the poster child for revisionist ideas of the “crisis.” However, it is also frequently used to counter such ideas by those who would defend the older narrative. The practice of inscribing building projects has figured much in this discussion, an issue that will be treated in some depth in the following chapter.

It should be mentioned that at no point does my material show any hint of Christianity, and no names overlap with persons that are known from Christian sources other than one proconsul under Diocletian, Annius Anullinus, who figures as a persecutor in hagiographies; however, he

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<sup>99</sup> On the “catastrophist” narrative of Late Antique Africa, Lepelley 1979: 13-16, blaming over- and misuse of legal and Christian sources, at odds with the epigraphic and archaeological record. Carthage had its *floruit* in the 4th c., Leone 2007: 66 and table on 115-6 listing the many rich *domus* recorded for the period. For the economy, see above p. 38 and chapter V.1.

<sup>100</sup> Coined by Lepelley 1979: 21 (repeated in 1997; see also 1992, 1996a, 2001a, 2001c) where he treats the persistence of euergetism in Africa and in other parts of the empire such as Syria and Arabia. Also in favor of continuity of social and political structures through the 3rd c., Witschel 2004: 244, concluding that we are much better able to understand urban elites in Africa than elsewhere due to the continued practice of inscribing; also 2006: 154-5 and *passim*.

does not feature in inscriptions as builder, but is mentioned only indirectly.<sup>101</sup> A father and son with the signum *Magnilianorum* appear as builders, dated to c. 300. One of them may be the *curator rei publicae* by the name of *Magnilianus* who officiated over persecution proceedings at *Thibiuca*.<sup>102</sup> While this is not impossible, it cannot be securely established; moreover, the inscriptions tell us nothing about the role of Christianity in relation to public construction. Most inscriptions treated in this study predate the persecutions by at least a decade; nor does Christian euergetism in the form of church building immediately replace the type of public construction my material represents. For these reasons, I have chosen not to examine the development of Christianity in Africa more closely, but I will discuss briefly the rural sees appearing in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, recently treated by Dossey.<sup>103</sup>

### *Geographical considerations*

An issue that affects many studies on building epigraphy, however, is that Roman North Africa was far from uniform. Lepelley claimed that there existed two distinct Africas, and one could argue for several more.<sup>104</sup> The history of Roman occupation and the varying social situation that preceded it produced very different situations, not least in terms of urbanism and construction. Even discounting the Hellenophone provinces of Cyrenaica and Egypt, the area stretched over 2,500 km and encompassed regions that were among the first to come under Roman dominion,

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<sup>101</sup> *CIL* 8.1411; see *PLRE* 1: 79, *Anullinus* 3. He is mentioned in *Passio SS. Dativi, Saturnini et sociorum* (ed. Franchi de'Cavalieri 1935). Optatus (3.8) called him an *impius iudex*.

<sup>102</sup> *Passio sancti Felicis episcopi Thibiensis*, P. L. 8: 686-687. See *CIL* 8.23964-5.

<sup>103</sup> Dossey 2010, *passim*.

<sup>104</sup> Lepelley 1979:37, 55-57 repeated in 2001c: 96 n. 35; Courtois 1955:65-91. On two Africas also Saastamoinen 2008a:36.

as well as some of the most recent.<sup>105</sup> Southwest Algeria and Southern Libya were not subdued until Septimius Severus, and Roman control over their largely pastoralist populations was never firmly established. By contrast, the major part of the region with which I have chosen to work was settled by sedentary farmers before the arrival of Romans, and its borders were not extended any further after Vespasian.<sup>106</sup> This area represents one of Lepelley's two Africas, densely urbanized far into the interior and with a long history of participation in Mediterranean cultural practices. The first part of Africa to be occupied by Romans, it was also the one to remain so the longest, after which it became the heartland of the Vandal kingdom as well as of Justinianic Africa. Roman presence penetrated deep into the social fabric, and the vast bulk of inscriptions derive from here. Apart from the Gordianic revolt, it remained calm throughout the period here treated, according to Lepelley much like a "Switzerland during the war."<sup>107</sup> To the West and East the situation was different: modern Morocco, Western Algeria and most of Libya housed a string of Roman (or Romanized) towns clinging to the coasts and major roads, while areas beyond them were far less affected by Mediterranean culture. The ethnic and cultural borders remained sharper, with intermittent hostilities arising, in particular after the expansions of Septimius Severus. This the "second" of Lepelley's Africas falls outside of this study, in part for reasons of manageability but also because including it would skew the material. For instance, studies that

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<sup>105</sup> Lepelley 1979: 56 calculates the dimensions of the truly Romanized parts of North Africa to c. 110,400 km<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> Gasco 1972 and Fishwick & Shaw 1977 are the go-to articles for the formation of *Africa Proconsularis*. In brief, *Africa Vetus* was created by Scipio in 202 BCE and lay within a demarcation ditch, the *Fossa Regia*, which ran from *Thabraca* on the northern coast to *Taparura* (Sfax) on the southeastern. Caesar added *Africa Nova*, west of the *fossa*, in 46 BCE, and Augustus combined the two in 27 BCE to create *Africa Proconsularis*. For the *Fossa Regia*, Poinssot 1934-5: 390 n. 1. Septimius Severus separated the province *Numidia* from *Africa Nova* before 208 (based on *AE* 1911.107). See Le Glay 1956: 294-308; esp. 298, and Rankov 1990.

<sup>107</sup> Lepelley 2001d: 75 (with the exception of the events of 238).

conflate the two describe defensive walls as one of the most common objects constructed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., of which there is not a single instance attested in the study area, from the time of Caesar to the reconquest of Justinian, in spite of the fact that it has produced more than half of all African building inscriptions (58.5% according to a recent calculation).<sup>108</sup> Another important reason for the limitation is that the material from the chosen area derives from a great variety of settlement types, from the behemoth Carthage to villages and estates. This has allowed me to compare the behavior of different social strata and relate them to a number of factors such as the nature of the localities – for instance, whether they were primarily agrarian communities, administrative nodes, points of defense or trade centers. In the less urbanized West and East, such differentiation is rarely possible as the few towns carried all the above functions.

### *Partitions*

In political terms, the region treated in this study corresponds to the provinces Africa Proconsularis and *Byzacena* after the divisions made by Diocletian. The former should not be confused with the old province of the same name which was far larger, and unless I expressly state otherwise, the name implies its late, not early extent. Although widened toward the west to include part of Numidia on a stretch from *Hippo Regius* (Annaba) southward, its dimensions still became drastically reduced as it lost large tracts in the South and East that became the new provinces *Byzacena* and *Tripolitania*. The border between the latter two, which is also the limit

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<sup>108</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 28-29 shows the distribution over the African provinces. The chart on pp. 45-6 on the relative frequencies of different building types present the construction of walls as one of the most common items built, on the rise particularly in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., which is entirely misleading for my area where no defenses have been attested at all during the entire imperial period until the Justinianic reconquest, when many towns received impressive fortifications.

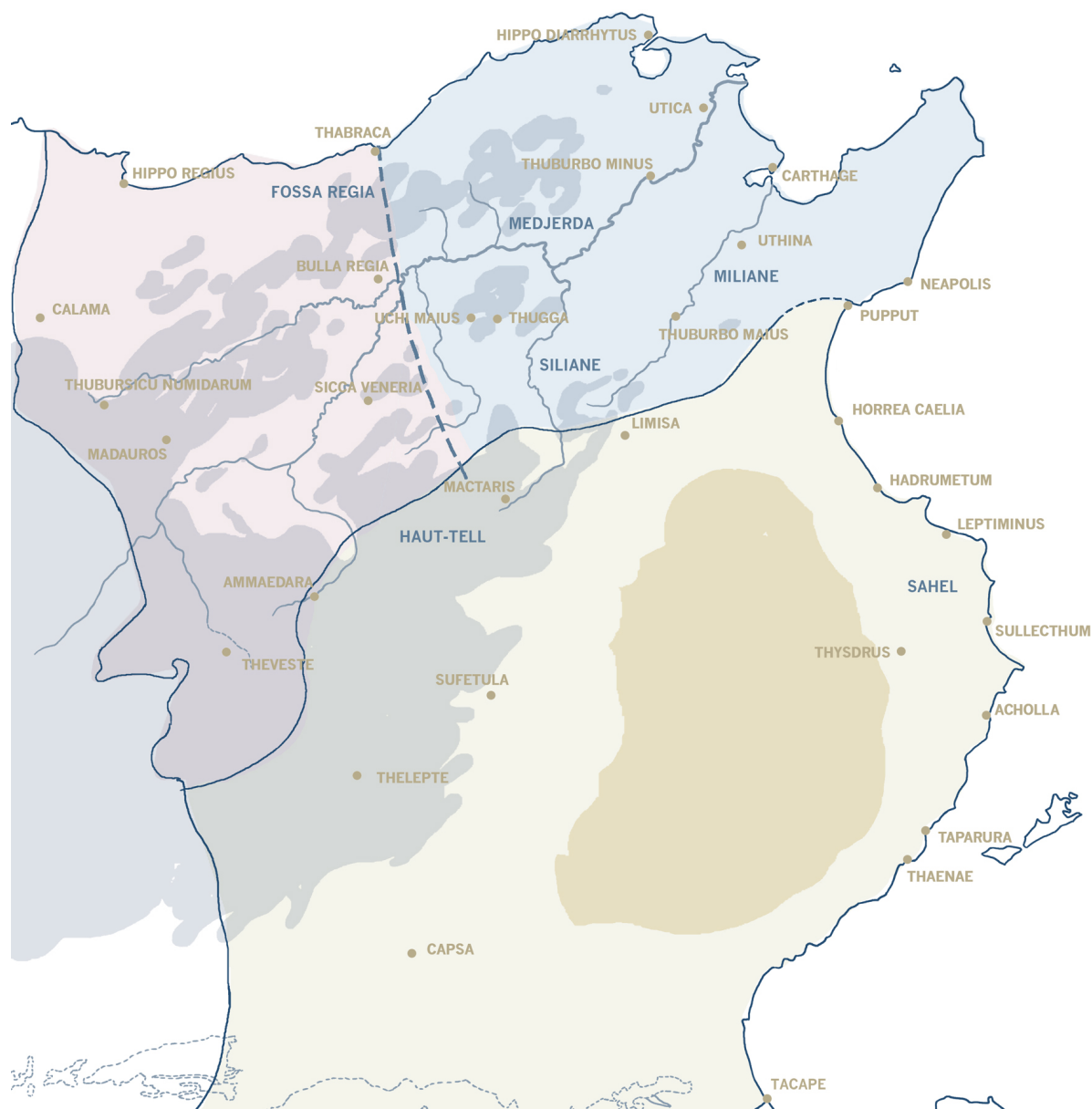


Fig. 3. Overview of the area and subregions studied, including major towns. The Northeast is mapped in blue, and corresponds to the administrative territory of Carthage, the *pertica*. The West is mapped in pink, and constitutes the area west of the *Fossa Regia*, with a string of mainly Flavian towns from *Hippo Regius* in the north to the former legionary camps at *Ammaedara* and *Theveste* in the south. The province Byzacena is mapped in yellow, a set of diverse subregions bordering on a semi-arid steppe. Its exact borders are not known. The coastal and Northern parts were settled long before Roman occupation, with many Punic and Royal Numidian towns, and belonged to the earliest Roman province. The South and Southwest saw much presence of Berber tribes, often argued to be semi-nomadic. All defenses lie in the semi-desert zone to the South of the province, in Numidia and the new province Tripolitania.

of my chosen area, ran westward from *Tacape* (Gabès), placing the entire pre-desert *limes* region in Tripolitania and Numidia. Apart from an urban garrison at Carthage, Byzacena and Africa Proconsularis became civil provinces: the camp of the only African legion, the *legio III Augusta*, had been moved to *Lambaesis* (Lambèse) in Numidia already in 115.<sup>109</sup> The timeline of the partitions is not entirely settled, but happened at some point between 294 and 303 and appears to have been planned years in advance.<sup>110</sup> As my work progressed subdivisions became necessary, and I have split the area into three parts based on their demographic and epigraphic situation. These three zones, the limits of which have a long history (although rarely corresponding to political borders), have at times been accorded labels such as *Zeugitana* or the *pertica* of Carthage, *Numidia Proconsularis* and *Byzacena*, but I will for the most part refer to them to simply as the “Northeast,” the “West” and the “South.”

The first of the three subregions is the Northeast, in large measure coterminous with the administrative territory of Carthage, a megacity in ancient terms, and second only to Rome itself among Western towns. From the first foundation of *Colonia Iulia Karthago* by Caesar, its position in the region was exceptional in that its territory amounted to what was in essence a province in itself. It was also a very rich area, the well watered region surrounding the rivers Medjerda (ancient *Bagradas*), Miliane and Siliane, which was key to the provisioning of Rome

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<sup>109</sup> Le Bohec 1989 is the standard work on the *legio III Augusta*, first stationed at *Ammaedara* and moved to *Theveste* in 75. It counted c. 10,000 men, half of them legionaries, half auxiliaries. See also Gasco 1972: 30. The *cohors XIII urbana* (later exchanged for the *cohors I urbana*) at Carthage was assigned by Vespasian to guard the interests of the fisc; Echols 1961.

<sup>110</sup> The evidence has been set out by Chastagnol 1967. Witschel 2006: 191 and Oshimizu 2012 favors an early date before 298, while Di Vita-Evrard 1985: 168-71 suggests 301-3, but claims that the division was planned already under the Dyarchy. Tripolitania appears to have had a semi-autonomous status in 290-4 under its own proconsular legate. See chapter V p. 293-4.

with grain. That this production generated wealth is clear from the monumental finery displayed by the mass of small townships within the territory. These were technically dependent on Carthage, both the many peregrine communities of pre-Roman origin, and the enclaves of Roman citizens who counted as citizens of Carthage itself, while residing in *pagi*, administrative subdivisions of the city but often at a great distance from it.<sup>111</sup> This vast administrative unit is often termed the *pertica*, and much effort has been spent on tracing its outline.<sup>112</sup> It is fairly clear that it was bordered to the West by the *Fossa Regia* and to the South by the Dorsale range, but its extent to the North is less well established, although it likely reached the coast. In the Southeast it reached as far as *Pupput* (Hammamet) and included the fertile peninsula of Cap Bon.<sup>113</sup> Another *fossa* appears to have separated it from Northern Byzacena in the area of *Limisa* (Ksar Lemsā).<sup>114</sup> The term *pertica* is however not spatial, and a slew of towns within its confines were always independent, such as *Utica*, *Maxula*, and *Uthina* (Oudhna). As the 2<sup>nd</sup> century progressed the situation became still more confusing, with many yet dependent towns behaving as though they were *respublicae*, with full sets of municipal magistrates. Scholars have applied various intermediate ranks to describe them (such as “proto-municipalities”), but the situation is highly complex and much remains to be understood about their formal status.<sup>115</sup> The influx of Romans

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<sup>111</sup> Aounallah 2010a: 1615-24 on the ambiguity of the term *pagus*. The province was initially partitioned into subdistricts of peregrine settlements, *pagi stipendiorum*, e.g. *pagus Thuscae et Gunzuzi* governed by a prefect, but sub-units of colonies were also called *pagi*, outlying citizen enclaves at times in conjunction with a peregrine *civitas*. The classic study is Picard 1963.

<sup>112</sup> The term *pertica* is known from a Trajanic inscription (*AE* 1963.94). The key work on its function and formation is Poinssot 1962. His interpretation of the term has been followed by later scholars, as recently in a monograph by Aounallah (2010b). See also review by Lennart Gilhaus.

<sup>113</sup> See Aounallah & Maurin 2008: 247 for a recent assessment and map. They suggest it reached all the way to the Northern coast.

<sup>114</sup> A 1st c. BCE-CE east-west demarcation ditch east of *Limisa*; see Ferchiou 1986: 351.

<sup>115</sup> Gascou 1972: 167 describes them as “municipia to be.”

settlers was intense from early on, and the Northeast shows the strongest cultural affinity with Italy of the three regions. With time, the status of the township became less advertised, and perhaps of less significance; native and Roman communities residing in the same locations fused and became towns proper, at an increasing pace toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. It appears that class distinctions carried more weight in these “double towns” than juridical status, already at an early date.<sup>116</sup> With the gradual independence of its towns, the *pertica* as an administrative entity disintegrated, and the widespread municipalization of Septimius Severus effectively dissolved it, but the city of Carthage kept its grip on its hinterland. It retained its integrity as an area distinct from the neighboring regions, if no longer formally so.<sup>117</sup> The bulk of the epigraphic record from the entire imperial period comes from this highly urbanized region. That said, retrieval is spotty, with barely any epigraphic evidence at all from the most densely settled area farthest to the Northeast, including Cap Bon.<sup>118</sup>

The second subregion lies west of the *pertica* in what used to be the easternmost part of Numidia, but became attached to the Diocletianic province Africa Proconsularis. Augustine called it *Numidia Proconsularis*, which, though anachronistic, is a handy term that I will sometimes use.<sup>119</sup> The area was always distinct from the rest of Numidia and had its metropolis not at *Cirta* (Constantina) but at *Sicca Veneria* (Le Kef), both early colonies that had their own

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<sup>116</sup> Separate centers for the Roman *pagus* and native *civitas* has been rejected in the best known case of a “double town,” that of *Thugga*. For the discussion, see Khanoussi 1994; Khanoussi & Strocka eds. 2002; Ritter 2006.

<sup>117</sup> Paul (*Dig.* 50.18.8.11) relates that Carthage was awarded *Ius italicum* (together with *Utica* and *Lepcis Magna*), usually seen as a compensation. Gascou 2003: 232 dates the *ius* to Caracalla.

<sup>118</sup> Ben Baaziz 1999: 32, quoting the surveys of the *Carte Archéologique* which show very dense occupation on Cap Bon (1,639 sites on 3,000 km<sup>2</sup>). Février 1982: 325 argued the area was scarcely populated, likely based on the poor rates of epigraphy.

<sup>119</sup> The ecclesiastical province Numidia followed the older border and included the West, but the area politically belonged to Africa Proconsularis. See e.g. *Ep.* 6.16\*.



*perticae*.<sup>120</sup> This subregion, termed “the West,” stretches from the ports *Hippo Regius* and *Thabraca* (Tabarka) on the northern coast to *Theveste* (Tebessa) in the south. If the Northeast was dominated by the strong elites at Carthage, the West is more marked by imperial activity. *Ammaedara* (Haïdra) and *Theveste*, within Africa Proconsularis but geographically aligned with Numidia Proconsularis, were both former camps of the *III Augusta*, and a veteran identity is more notable in the colonies of the region than in their Northeastern counterparts, even though no new *deductiones* occurred past the 1<sup>st</sup> c.<sup>121</sup> The majority of the Western towns were promoted by Vespasian, who organized the region and built the north-south road that connects its towns.<sup>122</sup> *Theveste* and *Hippo Regius* reveal much activity by the *res privata*, as does *Simitthus* (Chemtou) which housed the quarries that produced giallo antica, for the shipment of which Hadrian built a road to *Thabraca*, while *Bulla Regia* (Hammam Derradji) is known to have supplied a host of civil servants and to have maintained close ties to several proconsuls.<sup>123</sup> But if these sizeable towns appear quite “Roman” in their monumental record as well as in their onomastic and epigraphic behavior, they are located in a landscape of native farming villages and estates that

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<sup>120</sup> For the *pertica* of *Sicca Veneria*, Aounallah & Maurin 2008: 232 with further references.

<sup>121</sup> Krimi 2003: 26. The largest area of centuriation attested in the empire stretched from *Ammaedara* southward and measured 254 by 110 km, established under Tiberius for the *III Augusta*. The presence of veterans was still felt here in the time of Apuleius; see *Apol.* 24.

<sup>122</sup> On the interventions of Vespasian and the ensuing spread of Romanization, M. Le Glay 1968. On Vespasianic promotions, Gascou 1972: 28: *Ammaedara* (when the legion was transferred to *Theveste*), *Madauros*, *Sufetula*, *Bulla Regia*, and *Hippo Regius* likely honorary colony. *Lambaesis* housed a detachment of the legion already under Augustus; Nerva founded *Sitifis*, and perhaps *Cuicul*, while Trajan founded *Thubursicu Numidarum*.

<sup>123</sup> On the close ties of *Bulla Regia* and surrounding towns to the imperial bureaucracy, Thébert 1973. The entire West constituted one *regio* for the management of imperial properties, judging by the 2nd c procurator *saltus Hipponiensis et Thevestini* (*ILAlg.* I.285). On the close ties to 2nd c. emperors seen through the many *Ulpii*, *Aelii* and *Aurelii* attested, Gascou 1972: 94-5. *Theveste* shows a unique presence of *augustales* beside the *curias* in honorific formulas, e.g. *CIL* 8.16556: ... *curiae universae et Augustales*.

only occasionally become visible in the epigraphic material.<sup>124</sup> This should not (necessarily) be interpreted as aggressive Roman dominion over native farmers, administered from towns profiting from an unequal exchange. The towns predate Roman occupation, and many of them had likely “self-Romanized” to a degree before promotion; at least this seems to be the case with the westernmost, *Thubursicu Numidarum*, a large and wealthy town that was the central node for the *Numidae*.<sup>125</sup> There was thus likely considerable ethnic continuity between town and village, and few Roman *pagi* appear to have been inserted in the landscape, a situation which would likely have been far more disrupting to native ways of life.<sup>126</sup> In any case, native presence is more strongly felt than in the Northeast. Often mentioned is the territory of the *Musulamii*, which stretched all the way from *Ammaedara* to *Thubursicu Numidarum*. What it represented in demographic terms is however unclear.

The third subregion, the “South” or *Valeria Byzacena* as the province was named, is the least homogenous of the three. Although south of the isohyet marking the 400mm annual rainfall required for non-irrigation farming, which runs along the ridge of the Dorsale range, the region is by no means barren.<sup>127</sup> At its center lies the Low Steppe, the *Bled*, which was not well suited for cultivation and never much inhabited, but it was encircled on all sides by zones of diverse

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<sup>124</sup> An example from the Diocletianic era is *Castellum Ma... rensium* (CIL 8.17327).

<sup>125</sup> Gascou 1972: 106-8 argues against treating it as a conscious insertion of a loyal enclave in unromanized land – Romanization went before promotion in the wealthy town. He suggests it was elevated to give the most Romanized tribes an advantage over the less “assimilables.”

<sup>126</sup> Fentress 2006: 10-12 on urban elites being both Punic and Berber. Two inscriptions that indicate that *paganica* were raised by Roman citizens in enclaves at *Aubuzza* (CIL 8.16368) and *Aïn Char* (CIL 8.23326) are among the few signs of their presence. Dossey 2010: 41 argues that the Northeast suffered the most disruption of native agricultural traditions due to Roman occupation, while the periphery in larger measure retained their pre-Roman settlement pattern. It should be noted however that the enormous area of centuriation that adjoined *Ammaedara* must have deeply affected the area; see above n. 121.

<sup>127</sup> The idea of a division drawn by the 400mm isohyet was introduced by Shaw 1984.

climates and history. Along the eastern coast lay *Byzacium* or the Sahel, a rather arid region with several sebkhas (salt lakes) but nonetheless densely populated and much exploited.<sup>128</sup> Aerial photographs have revealed traces of oil cultivation in the poorly watered zone along the border of the steppe, although what period the plantations dates to is not clear. The inland part of the area is remarkably short on towns or even villages, but dominated instead by a host of farmsteads and estates, several quite large. By contrast, the coast is lined by a string of old and prosperous Libyphoenician towns from *Pupput* in the north to *Tacape* in the south. *Hadrumentum* (Sousse), capital of the new province, was the largest and most important, with significant Roman enclaves of *negotiantes* and a nobility that was interlaced with that of Carthage. It was also a harbor for *res privata* goods from the interior.<sup>129</sup> The Libyphoenician ports were free early on, and their territory was separated from the rest of Byzacena by the *Fossa Regia*.<sup>130</sup> They appear to have been culturally distinct, using building techniques that differ from the rest of the province, and also consumed luxury materials and built baths at a higher rate, as seen in the villas found along the coast.<sup>131</sup> The one notable inland town in the Sahel is *Thysdrus*, second only to *Hadrumentum*

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<sup>128</sup> The survey teams of the *Carte Archéologique* have revealed 2,970 ancient sites on an area of 8,000 km<sup>2</sup>, a very high number, Sehili 2008: 781, Ben Baaziz 1999: 32. Of areas surveyed, only Cap Bon can compare; see above n. 117.

<sup>129</sup> Gasco 1972: 73 comments on high penalties for siding with Pompey for both *Hadrumentum* and *Thapsus*; the Roman conventus of *negotiantes* here must have been wealthy early on. The *regio Hadrumentina* is attested in *CIL* 8.11174-5 at *Segermes*. On aristocratic connections with the Northeastern senatorial families, Corbier 1982: 694-5.

<sup>130</sup> *CIL* 1.585 lists towns that won their freedom as a reward for their support of Rome against Carthage, among them *Thapsus*, *Acholla*, *Leptiminus* and *Hadrumentum*. All were still free in the 1st c., according to Pliny the Elder, *NH* 5.25 and 30.

<sup>131</sup> On the distinct character of the region, Ben Baaziz 1999: 33-34, 37-38. Cut stone is rare, and clay is the main building material in the Sahel even for high end structures with mosaic floors. The area is surprisingly little urbanized; Ben Baaziz compares it to Sraa Ouertane on the High Tell, which though a peripheral region had far more towns in a smaller area. The closer to the largest towns *Thysdrus* and *Hadrumentum*, the fewer nucleated settlements have been attested.

and seat of a procurator of the *res privata*, with close relations to central government; this is where Gordian I dwelled when he was approached by the rebels.<sup>132</sup> The importance of the Sahel is rarely recognized in epigraphic studies due to its dismally poor record, both from the inland areas and the coastal towns.

To the West and North of the steppe lay remnants of the old kingdom of Massinissa. Westward on the “High Steppe” lay the *Gamuta*, an area with many *saltus* which at times become visible in epigraphic record. The area figures much in debates on the Late Antique African economy, as it had significant pottery industries and produced olive oil at a rate far beyond its own needs. Its population consisted of native farmers and pasturers, largely sedentary although towns are few, and most (if not all) are Roman foundations. Significant ones are *Capsa* (Gafsa) and *Thelepte* (Thélepte) to the south, and *Sufetula* (Sbeitla) *Sufes* (Sabibah) and *Thala* (Talah) on the central plateau, as well as *Cillium* (Kasserine). North of the Bled lay the wealthiest and most urbanized part of the Byzacena inland, the old heartland of the Numidian kingdom on the “High Tell,” a portion of the Dorsale range which stretches across Tunisia from southwest to northeast. It consists of two subregions, the highland *Thusca* region centered upon *Mactaris* (Maktar), and the *Gamonia* which occupied the slopes toward the southeast and the coast.<sup>133</sup> In contrast to the Sahel, the towns of the area (beside *Mactaris*) were not large, but were instead quite numerous. Nucleated settlement was the norm long before Roman occupation, and

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<sup>132</sup> Christol 2008 places the procurator of *regio Leptiminensis* and *tractus Biz...*, attested in a late 3rd c. (*ILAlg.* 1.2035), under the *res privata* at *Thysdrus*. Of the four private statues in my sample from this city, none honors local magistrates, but one a *curator rei publicae*, one a proconsul, and two career equestrians. On the Gordianic rebellion, Herodian, *Hist.* 7.5.

<sup>133</sup> M’Charek 1999 *passim*, but esp. conclusions pp. 176-8 on the territories of the Numidian kings, the *Thusca*, *Gamonia* and *Gamuta*, and their fate under Roman rule. A description of the topography can be found also in Sehili 2008: 778-781.

the area was dotted with peregrine townships. Almost all present day villages present Roman era remains.<sup>134</sup> It was also an area that contained many estates, predominantly imperial ones after the extensive royal Numidian domains were gifted to the fisc, their goods shipped from *Hadrumentum* which was reached by a major road. The border between Byzacena and the Northeast is not securely drawn, especially closest to the coast where there seems to have been a fair amount of cultural overlap with communities within the *pertica*. The port *Pupput*, usually ascribed to Byzacena, has been attributed to both provinces.<sup>135</sup>

To conclude, although I separated the three regions based on their epigraphic behavior, their borders follow lines that have historical and/or demographic significance, if not evident on political maps. From an epigraphic point of view, the divergent one is the *pertica* - the other two (bar the anomalous, almost entirely silent Sahel) apply much the same practices of inscribing and will often be bunched as the “periphery.” The different dynamic in the Northeast was, I will argue, created by the presence of the powerful and wealthy city of Carthage, and will have had but few comparanda anywhere in the Roman empire.

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<sup>134</sup> Of 75 modern villages in the area, all but 3 have Roman era remains. Ben Baaziz 2000: 293.

<sup>135</sup> Ørsted 2000: 102-3 argues for placing it in *Proconsularis*. The territory of the small town Segermes may have straddled the divide, although the town itself clearly belonged to Byzacena. According to Ørsted 1998: 170, this border reflects pre-Roman settlement patterns.

## **II. LOCALS BUILD: AFRICANS IN BUILDING EPIGRAPHY**

### **II.1 Building epigraphy and Africa: introduction and methodological issues**

In order to answer questions about construction projects under Diocletian and how imperial efforts relate to those of local agents, I have had to delve rather deep into the epigraphic landscape of North Africa. Although the works of many have contributed enormously, in particular those of Ari Saastamoinen and Claude Lepelley, I found that much of the methodology for the type of questions that I was asking was lacking, and in effect had to invent my own. In the end, it entailed scrutinizing the entire record of building epigraphy from two centuries, together with a range of supplementary sources. As a result my study has grown to encompass the medium as a whole; how it was employed, and not employed, in my chosen part of Africa.

As mentioned, the rich epigraphic material has always held a dominant position in scholarship on North Africa. Building inscriptions in particular have been used as a source for urban topography and euergetism.<sup>136</sup> A recent survey of African construction in the later periods calls the Classical city the prime expression of the power of the Roman empire, expressed in public buildings.<sup>137</sup> Thus, to trace public construction has been treated as a key source for understanding the development of the empire as a whole, both its rise and its fall. The African epigraphic material is often used as an index of prosperity, and especially to argue for or against the effects of the “3<sup>rd</sup> c. crisis.” Charts of frequencies present striking graphics: after a humble start comes a dramatic increase in the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c., followed by a precipitous drop after Caracalla.

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<sup>136</sup> As in the seminal studies of Jouffroy 1986 and Duncan-Jones 1963. On euergetism more recently, Wesch-Klein 1990; on urban topography Leone 2007.

<sup>137</sup> Leone 2007: 33-4.

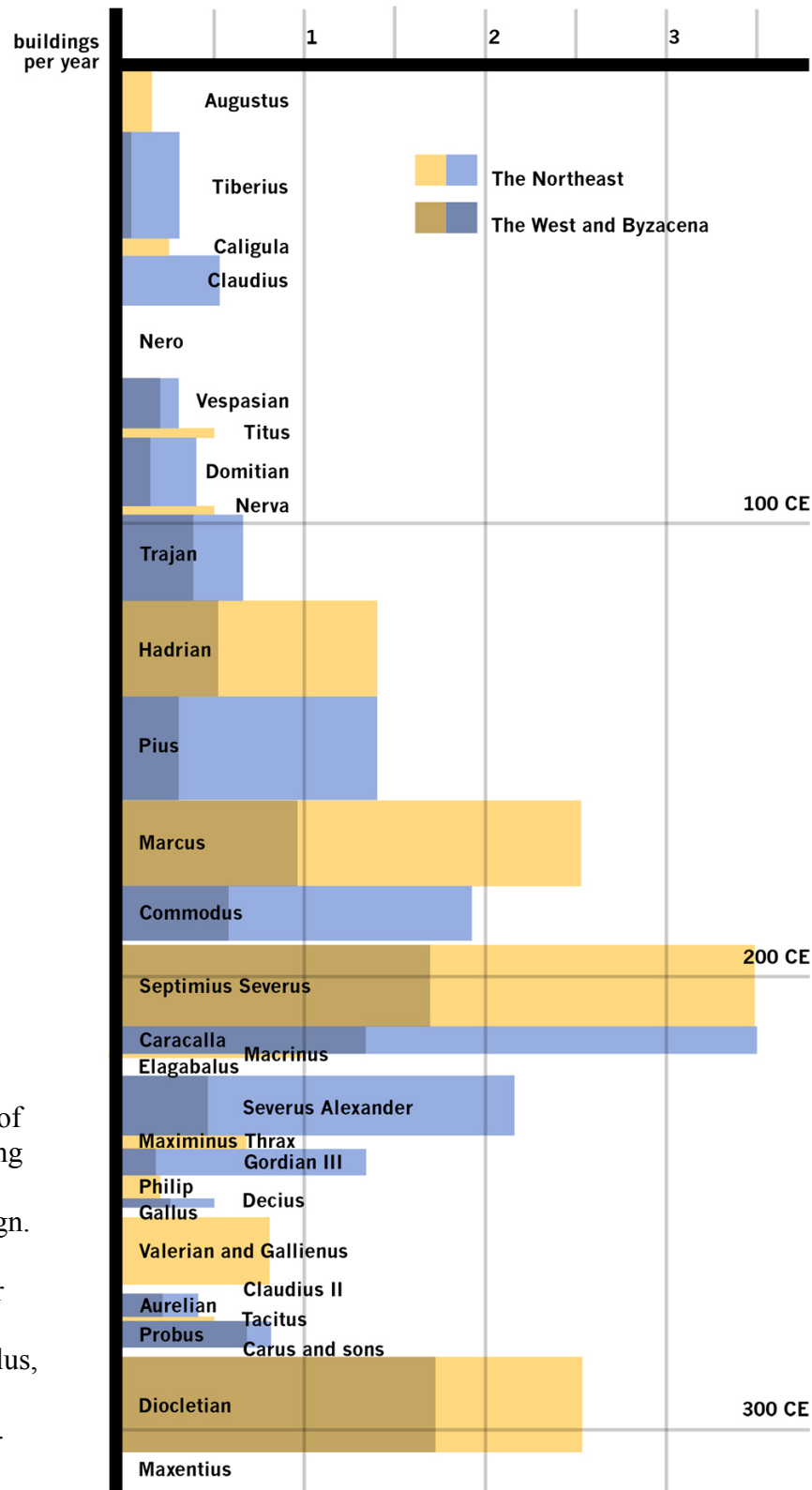


Fig. 4. Number of inscribed building projects attested per year and reign. No items have been attested for Nero, Pertinax, Elagabalus, Gallus, Claudius II and Carus with sons.

After modest spurts under Severus Alexander and Gallienus the record stabilizes at a steady but low pace until the reign of Diocletian, when it suddenly rises to levels trumping the best of the Antonines. This curve conforms well with established views on the well-being of the empire as a whole, and has been one of the prime pieces of evidence for this view. The Diocletianic “rebirth” is usually taken as a sign of recovery after the crisis decades, although some scholars choose to obscure it, for instance by periodizing by centuries. This cuts the Diocletianic record in half, and furthermore conflates it with the immediately preceding and following decades which have produced very few instances, thus transforming the peak into a dismal low.<sup>138</sup> Another means to reduce the significance of the Diocletianic sample is like Duncan-Jones to discount references to restorations, which are more common among later inscriptions, on the grounds that they may not represent substantial investments.<sup>139</sup> This rather extreme position is unique as far as I know, and I have included these inscriptions – not, however, because I am convinced that they always represent great efforts (a doubt that can be extended to many *ex novo* projects as well) but because my concern lies more with presentation than with actual construction. In this context, empty claims are as informative as those that represent real investments, if not more so.

What is common to most authors is to treat the record of building inscriptions as a fair indicator of the rate of actual construction in African towns, and, in extension, of their vitality and prosperity. But can the material really be so used? I will argue that there are considerable problems associated with treating the rate of African building inscriptions as an index of

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<sup>138</sup> Jouffroy 1986: 202 treats the reign of Septimius Severus as a discrete period even though it, too, straddles a century divide. The reason she gives for doing so is that his special attention to Africa merits special treatment, which serves to make the period stand out even more.

<sup>139</sup> Duncan-Jones 2004.



prosperity, or even as a comprehensive source on how public construction was conducted in the African towns, and by whom.

The issue of combining all African provinces has already been mentioned, creating misleading statistics for my area in particular, but what is more serious is that the sample is not representative even within this limited region.<sup>140</sup> For one, the fact that the region is far from evenly excavated has yielded uneven retrieval patterns, with huge records for certain locations. The French conducted “total excavations” in the early 20th c. of towns such as *Cuicul* (Djemila) and *Thamugadi* (Timgad), a practice that was never repeated on the same scale. In my area such large scale excavations have produced large records for *Thubursicu Numidarum* and *Madauros*, and in particular the latter comes across as a far more impressive town than it actually was, with as many as 24 building inscriptions from Augustus to Diocletian, to be compared to what were actually the grandest cities of this region, *Hippo Regius* with 3 building inscriptions, and *Sicca Veneria* with 6 undated fragments, of which two probably refer to statues. The most commonly quoted example in studies on Africa, *Thugga* (Dougga), has a massive record of 56 building inscriptions that vastly exaggerates its relative importance – *Thugga* was no metropolis but a middling town dependent on Carthage, not even located on a major road.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> See Noël Duval’s response to Waldherr 1987-1989 that one must not use epigraphy as the sole criterion on which to base arguments of wealth. The view is supported by Witschel 2004: 257, who argues that frequency of epigraphy is not good evidence of the economic situation, and includes references from several locations where the rates of construction and of building epigraphy do not match, e.g. Lycia.

<sup>141</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 29-30 tones down the significance of this “very ordinary hill town” and postulates a population of c. 10,000, respectable but not comparable to the grand ports. A predilection for long-winded texts posted in multiples (one project was published with 7 copies) makes survival of fragments more likely than in most towns.

For most towns the problem is not one of over- but underrepresentation, an issue that is seldom fully recognized: the two most prosperous and populous regions of all Roman North Africa are almost entirely void of building epigraphy. The by far most populated region lay Northeast of a line from *Hippo Diarrhytus* (Bizerte) to *Pupput*, and has produced 6 building inscriptions in total (excluding Carthage, where 6 dated inscriptions have been retrieved).<sup>142</sup> This can be compared to the small inland town *Musti* (Hr Mest), which alone has produced 25. All ports in the Northeast are well nigh invisible in terms of epigraphy, and most critical is obviously the poor record of Carthage, which in terms of size and significance dwarfs all other African cities. Similarly, only 6 items in total have been retrieved from all the ports of the coast of Byzacena together, including *Acholla* (Ras Boutria), *Thapsus* (Ras Dimas), *Sullecthum* (Salakta), *Leptiminus* (Lamtah), *Hadrumetum* and *Pupput*. The capital *Hadrumetum* has produced only one (undated) fragment. Inland towns have generally fared better, but the most important of these are again underrepresented: *Thysdrus* is home to both a famous amphitheatre and an imperial procurator, but regrettably to very little building epigraphy (3 dated, 3 undated). *Assuras* (Zanfour) (1), *Maxula* (2) and *Thuburbo Minus* (0) were early colonies of greater significance than their poor records imply. The most important city in the West, *Sicca Veneria*, has not produced a single dated building inscription. In effect, every major city in the province is critically underrepresented, while villages in the *pertica* come across as giants. Geographic gaps in the Diocletianic record do not thus signify a departure from the norm; it is on the contrary

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<sup>142</sup> At least two of these are not building inscriptions but statue bases that mention construction, e.g. *Pupput* (CIL 8.24095) and *Curubis* (ILAfr. 320). That epigraphy is a treacherous guide to settlement density is shown by the case of Cap Bon, which Février (1985: 32) regarded as an area of low settlement density, but which the *Carte Archéologique* project has shown to have had the largest site count per land unit of all areas surveyed; see above n. 117. Carthage has produced quite a few undated fragments, but even including these the city is critically underrepresented.

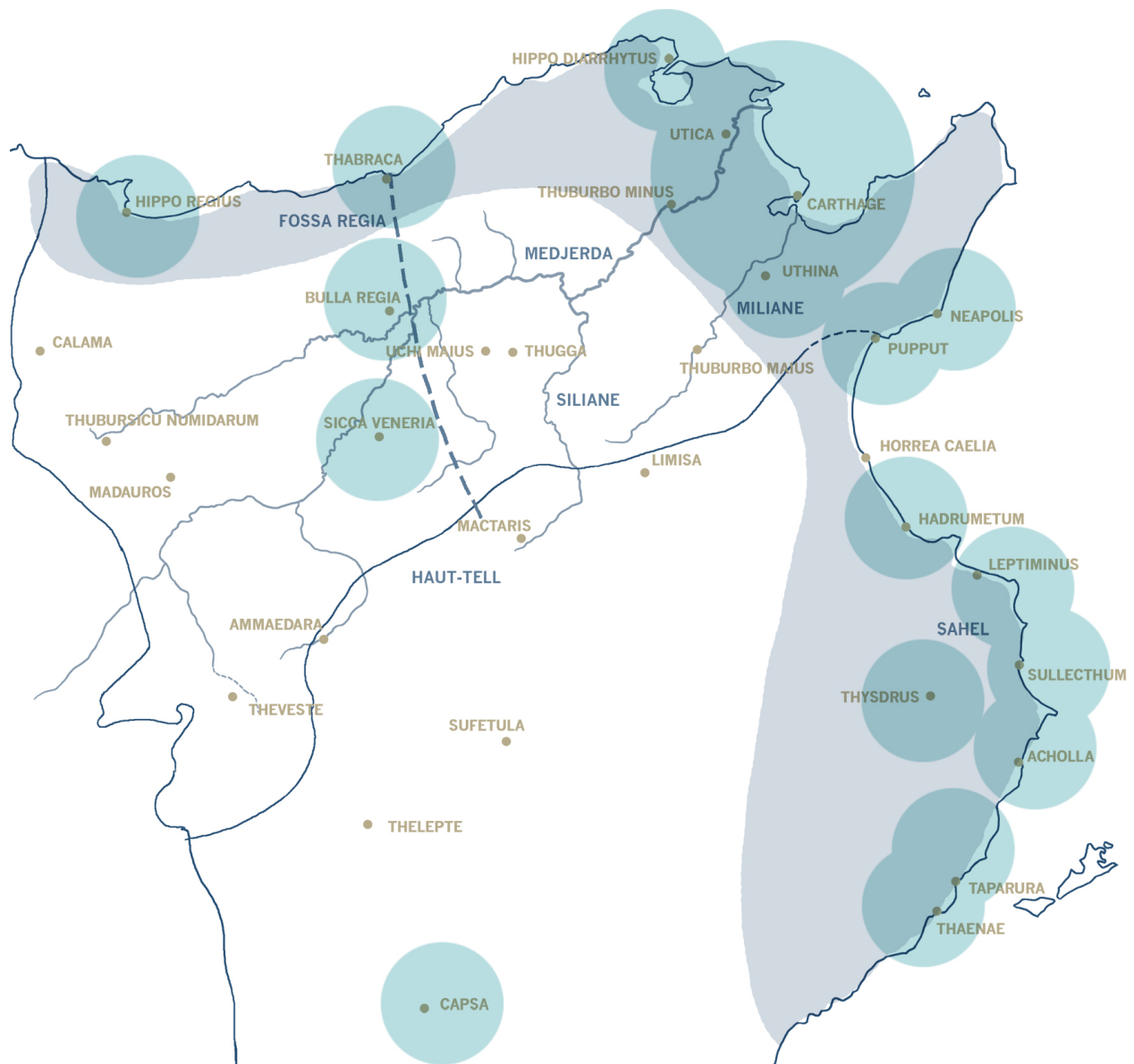


Fig. 5. Densely populated areas and major towns underrepresented in building epigraphy. The record is the most misleading for the port cities, and for *Thysdrus* and *Sicca Veneria*.

remarkable that some items likely do derive from them at all (as suggested for *Hadrumetum*, Carthage and *Utica*, and attested at the port *Thabraca*). This absence – if even recognized – is usually blamed on continuous habitation and frequent reuse, sometimes also on poor quality

stones.<sup>143</sup> It could be argued that in spite of the difficulties, retrieval and survival are random processes that produce representative samples if viewed from enough distance.<sup>144</sup> However, the scanty record for some of the towns mentioned above goes beyond what can be explained by poor survival and retrieval, and in my opinion is due to unequal original production. In the course of this study it has become increasingly clear that all towns did not apply the medium in the same manner. Sizable, wealthy, well preserved and well excavated towns have produced very little of the sort. The old northern port *Hippo Regius* is a case in point; the state of preservation and excavation of the site is excellent, with numerous public structures and a rich harvest of honorifics. The record of building epigraphy is however disproportionately low, and what there is is heterogeneous.<sup>145</sup> A massive amount of honorifics has been retrieved from the very well preserved and excavated town of *Bulla Regia*, which has produced a mere 3 dated building inscriptions - one dating to Tiberius and one to Diocletian, thus just one from the “golden years” of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Equally telling is the poor record from *Uthina* (Oudhna), one of the better excavated towns in Tunisia, with no post-Roman habitation and a good record of epigraphy, but no building inscriptions at all – the one item in the catalogue is derived from a statue base.<sup>146</sup> *Sufetula* in

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<sup>143</sup> On the poor quality of local stones in the Sahel, Ben Baaziz 1999: 34; repeated by Sehili 2008: 779-780. Waldherr 1987-1989: 118 claimed survival and retrieval to be fairly even over the region and that rates of excavation did not favor any particular part of it, vehemently rejected by N. Duval in his response (p. 132).

<sup>144</sup> So e.g. Horster 2001: 7, treating imperial construction in all Western provinces.

<sup>145</sup> A 1st c. pavement inscription, unique in my sample (*AE* 1951.82); an aedicula dedicated to Hadrian that is perhaps better labeled an imperial statue (*ILAlg.* 1.399); a brief statement that the city restored a bath (*AE* 1958.141).

<sup>146</sup> The statue base from *Uthina* derives from the amphitheatre (see above n. 9), one of the largest in Africa. On the surprising lack of building epigraphy, Ben Abdallah *et al* 1998: 37. For the site, see *Oudhna* I and II (Ben Hassen & Maurin 1998 and 2004), esp. 1998: 32-33, 42-43, 117. Further examples of towns with well preserved monumental centres but few building inscriptions are *Simitthus* (4) and *Utica* (3). A calculation by Le Bohec (quoted in *Uthina* I: 62-63) on the

Byzacena is among the best preserved towns in all of North Africa, and one might have expected more than the 4 pre-Diocletianic items, not least seeing the intense Byzantine building activity on the site, which tended to preserve fragments as spolia (and a long row of honorifics have been so retrieved). Finally, although not well preserved, *Sicca Veneria* has left behind a substantial enough record of honorifics for the complete silence in building epigraphy to raise an eyebrow. It seems that these large, wealthy towns simply did not produce building epigraphy at the same rate as many of their less significant neighbors, and few of the exceptions date to the “boom” years.

Furthermore, in towns where construction was habitually published, not all manner of projects were so inscribed. A great many categories of construction do not feature nearly as much in the medium as they do in the archaeological record, and others appear to be missing entirely. Underrepresented are almost all projects of utilitarian character such as water cisterns and street pavings, but also more glamorous projects such as basilicas and markets – features present in abundance among the archaeological remains of the African towns but which have left few epigraphic traces.<sup>147</sup> Curiously, silence also shrouds the most high-powered structures: arenas and baths, and particularly amphitheatres. Although they are plentiful in the archeological evidence, few can be associated with a builder; furthermore, exceptions to this anonymity almost always derive from statue bases, not building inscriptions, as in the case of the amphitheatre at

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number of recruits in the *III Augusta* that hail from African towns gives an idea of their relative prominence: 177 were from Carthage, followed by *Utica* (29) and *Sicca Veneria* (17), after which came *Simitthus* (14), *Uthina* and *Maxula* (9 each). Worth noting from outside my area is the curious silence at *Lepcis Magna* under the Severans, well established as a period of intense public construction. Wesch-Klein 1990: 49 puts it down to a curious accident of survival.

<sup>147</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 7 explains the lack of utilitarian structures with a concern for prestige motivating the inscription. While this is no doubt true, it does not explain the absence of basilicas or curias from the record, let alone arenas and baths.

*Uthina*. In my database, 305 texts refer to temples, 37 to any kind of entertainment structure.<sup>148</sup> Even rather middling towns often had several baths, which also required constant refurbishment, but only rarely does anyone claim to have paid for such work.<sup>149</sup> Conversely, quite insignificant contributions to temples were often announced with great pomp, such as the addition of four steps to a staircase or the donation of a silver vessel.<sup>150</sup> Every added ornament appears to have occasioned a new inscription, and many projects were announced in duplicates, *gemellae*. It may be that “missing” projects were broadcast as well – we can only glimpse a few subspecies of all texts that were publicly displayed, many of which may have been painted on perishable materials, or when more stately, posted on bronze plaques.<sup>151</sup> In any case, building epigraphy does not provide a blueprint of how construction was conducted in the African towns – the publication of a building project with an inscription in stone seems not to have been an automatic consequence of construction, but associated with certain building types, in certain locations. As I will argue, it was also associated with certain social groups, under certain circumstances, which were subject to changes. The propensity to record construction through inscriptions in durable materials was *not* equal over time, which makes the frequencies of building epigraphy a poor

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<sup>148</sup> Of the latter, many are known from statue bases only, very few from building inscriptions; see below pp. 90-92. A quick look at the catalogue of Jouffroy on items known solely from archaeology shows an over-representation of entertainment structures, twice as many as temples.

<sup>149</sup> In later periods, restorations of baths are among items most commonly published, but remain rare during the period here covered. On the far more frequent need of repair on baths and aqueducts than other structures, Saastamoinen 2008a: 46-47.

<sup>150</sup> *AE* 1995.1790, *Ammaedara*, late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Other paltry projects, dating from the reign of Hadrian to Septimius Severus: *ILTun.* 1281 (*Vallis*), two columns in a shrine; *ILAlg.* 1.399 (*Hippo Regius*), an aedicula with two columns; *AE* 1968.586 (*Musti*), statues and silver donated to a shrine; *CIL* 8.26593 (*Thugga*), bronze *cancelli*. Undated, *CIL* 8.23997 (*Giufi*, modern Bir Mcherga), one column with capital.

<sup>151</sup> *Quodvultdeus, Liber de promissionibus et praedictionibus Dei* 3.44, mentions a bronze inscription from a temple dating to Marcus, showing that the practice was not uncommon.

index of prosperity. A major part was played, I will argue, by the relationship of the communities and individuals in question to Carthage. This city can be compared to a black hole – invisible in herself, she affected everything in her surroundings. The role of Carthage for public construction in the towns of its hinterland, both as a promoting and dampening factor, has come to the fore as a major theme of this study.

To claim, as Lepelley does, that building epigraphy provides “une vue exacte de l’activité bâtitrice dans les villes et, donc, de la conjuncture économique” is thus problematic, with consequences for how we evaluate the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. lull, as well as the ensuing peak.<sup>152</sup> A record that does not include any of the major cities, and omits most types of building projects, cannot claim to be anywhere near representative. But the issue goes further than numbers: it pays to remember that these inscriptions are not in fact buildings, but publications of events. They contain a strong rhetorical element which makes them close to honorifics. Saastamoinen goes so far as to call them propaganda, the builder shamelessly praising his or her own activity as opposed to statues which were at least accorded by others.<sup>153</sup> I would grant them a certain documentary quality as testimonies to duties fulfilled, but agree that they toe the line between faithful recording and exaggerated self-praise, and that their claims are not always to be trusted. For instance, the forum

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<sup>152</sup> Lepelley 1979: 59. Against the idea that building epigraphy can be used as an index of prosperity, Eck 1999, noting that not all projects were inscribed, and Février 1987, treating survival and retrieval issues. Neither however treats unequal production in the towns.

<sup>153</sup> Witschel and Thomas 1992: 136 reject the notion that building epigraphy can be equated to construction, and list a number of scholars who have made this mistake, among them authorities on my area such as Lepelley, Jouffroy, Duncan-Jones, and Waldherr. The propagandistic sense of building inscriptions is noted by Saastamoinen 2000: 1686 and 2008a: 4-7. He also comments on the vagueness of the description of the projects, the scope of which can rarely be assessed.

portico at *Thugga* has been constructed a suspect number of times.<sup>154</sup> In some cases the buildings seem merely to provide the excuse for inscribing, and are often not even mentioned. Actual construction or not, what these texts do convey is that it was seen as beneficial to *present* oneself as builder in this place, at this time, in this manner. It is this act of broadcasting construction, rather than the building process itself, that is of interest for how to see the activities during the reign of Diocletian. For my purposes, frequencies, or even the matter of “crisis” and “rebirth,” are less significant than what meanings were assigned to the posting of these inscriptions – my questions are more concerned with the “why” and “how” than the “how much.”

If quantification of building inscriptions has problems, it should not be replaced by cherry picking. A more holistic perspective is called for if an accurate image of the use of the medium is to be arrived at. To do so I began by creating a database, containing 705 building inscriptions and testifying to 677 building projects. Rather than raw frequencies, I have traced what elements tend to appear together, and which ones rarely ever do, thereby identifying trends in what manner of projects were presented by whom, where, and how. A number of factors have been examined side by side, to allow for comparisons between regions, periods, agents and objects. This has led to the discovery of patterns and regional peculiarities, including conspicuous silences, that would not have been noticeable through quantifying too crudely. These patterns have then provided the background for further discussions. I have delineated a number of subgroups of builders which will be discussed separately, each with their own aims, and their own uses of epigraphy. Their activities have been traced over time, by reign rather than the more

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<sup>154</sup> Under Tiberius (*IL Afr.* 558), Pius (*CIL* 8.26524), possibly also Marcus (*CIL* 8.26527) and finally in the reign of Gallienus (*CIL* 8.10620). Also, *cancelli* were added to the rostra under Septimius Severus (*CIL* 8.26593).



blunt dynasties or centuries. I have also collected undated inscriptions and fragments in order to ascertain that the dated record is representative of the type of activity present on each location. Furthermore, I have gathered as complete a record of statue bases to both emperors and locals as I have been able, a sample too large for comprehensive treatment here (2,000+), but which has brought a deeper understanding of the social processes that determined status in the respective towns, and the part played in it by imperial honorifics such as statues. The role of the township as the arena for the aspirations of a number of agents is a recurring theme in this study; of local townsfolk, of high ranking elites with agendas that reach beyond the locality, of provincial government, and of the *res privata*. Though at times appearing in the same locations, the inscriptions of these different agents do not always represent the same social processes. The town as an agent in its own right is an important issue that I find has often been misunderstood, in particular the town as builder, which has been given its own section. The size and status of the town, its relation to Carthage and/or to imperial administration, its communications, economy and demography, are factors that have been taken into consideration.

As mentioned in the introduction, I have found it necessary to subdivide the region into three distinct zones. Even with these limitations this outline is by necessity broad. Many nuances will be lost, and important features will not be treated with the detail they deserve, but hopefully I will be able to convey a faithful enough image of the conventions that formed the background to the construction efforts under Diocletian. I will begin by describing what social strata can be identified among the local builders and what characterizes their inscriptions, go on to discuss their aims and audiences, and finally trace the fate of these conventions over time. Maps for all reigns discussed are available in Appendix A.

## II.2 Local conventions: civic and private construction.

Africans who are presented as builders through epigraphy can roughly be divided into four categories: local notables, high status benefactors, estate farmers, and towns as collectives. The first category is by far the most numerous, followed by towns. These two groups represent in large measure the same individuals, either building independently as individuals or collectively as *ordines*. The remaining two categories occupy opposite ends of the social spectrum, and though they are less numerous, I will argue that they are of great importance.

Private men and women dominate the record, representing roughly 70% percent of the sample from all three zones.<sup>155</sup> As described in the introduction, to define their identity in terms of ethnicity is not as straightforward a task as one might hope, and I will for the most part refrain from attempting to. Something that however can be discussed with some precision is class, due to the habit of including rank and official titles in the nomenclature. There is perhaps no need to point out that well nigh all builders in the sample should be considered “elite,” and that thus only a small fraction of African society is visible in the material. This regrettable lack of social depth comes with the territory - the agents are by default such as could afford to fund a building project, which certainly was not everybody.<sup>156</sup> But within the said elite was great variation – the social distance was vast between a member of the *ordo* of Carthage and a decurion of a small town, not to mention a tenant farmer on an imperial estate. Class is what primarily distinguishes

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<sup>155</sup> Percentage of the texts which give the builder, dating from Nerva to the death of Carinus.

<sup>156</sup> Duncan-Jones 1963: 166 warns against the assumption that we ever meet any “humble” stratum in this type of material. To donate a gift of 1,000 HS, a negligible sum in this context, was only feasible for those comfortably well off. Writing about public acts of euergetism, Briand-Ponssart 1999:109 expressed surprise at how few plebeians feature among the benefactors. He concluded that they did not “feel the need” to make themselves manifest in this way. That they lacked the means (or the grant) by which to do so never, it seems, occurred to him.

the first three categories of builders, but there are further criteria that separate their building activities, which I will argue should be seen as distinct in nature, not just in scale.

### *Local notables*

The vast majority of the building inscriptions of private individuals record the building projects of officeholders in the towns in which the structures were raised. More often than not, these projects represent contributions required for advancement in the *cursus honorum*, transformed into an obligation to build public structures. This has resulted in a mass of inscriptions documenting the fulfillment of these requirements, typically featuring the phrase *ob honorem* followed by the position sought, or variations on the theme. Many are fragmentary, but of all building inscriptions pertaining to private individuals complete enough to tell, *ob honorem* construction is attested for two thirds of the sample, while much of the remaining third consists of brief texts that do not reveal the process behind the erection of the structures.<sup>157</sup> The positions sought are in the overwhelming majority of cases imperial priesthoods, *flamen perpetuus* or *flaminica*, more rarely that of *duumvir* (or the corresponding *sufes* and *magister* in peregrine towns). No instance of *ob honorem* construction occurs for lower positions, not even aediles, who are presented as builders in only five inscriptions in total (one dating to 20 BCE and thus outside the timeframe of this study).<sup>158</sup> Rather few of the inscriptions thus concern councillors

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<sup>157</sup> *Ob honorem* construction represents more than half of the entire record of building epigraphy for all of Africa; Wesch-Klein 1990: 41. Formulas that describe sums allocated *in nomine* of a relative should likely be counted among career payments, too.

<sup>158</sup> Neither of these projects was raised *ob honorem*. An early, fragmentary text mentions two aediles together with a row of public works (*CIL* 8.978, *Curubis*, 20 BCE); aediles built a temple of Mercury and supply a stone *labrum* with lead water conduits (*CIL* 8.23991, *Giufi*, Severus Alexander); aediles built either the circus or aediculae in it (*CIL* 8.1486, 1492, *Thugga*, Severus

*per se*, and almost none below the level of *duumvir*. Yet the *curias* of even middling towns had numerous members; one hundred has been suggested as a mean but as many as three hundred are mentioned in an inscription from *Thuburbo Maius* (Hr el Kasba).<sup>159</sup> These have no visibility in the medium, and it seems thus that the use of building epigraphy was in large measure the arena of *flamines*, an elite within the local elite. The *flamines* were annual honorific posts which counted as the highest level of the *cursus*, held after the *duumvirate*.<sup>160</sup> They were open to women, visible in the record to a considerable degree, and were also independent of Roman citizenship.<sup>161</sup> It was thus at the same time the most flexible and the most elevated of the local honors, and not only the pride of the individual but of the town: the number of *flamines* it housed reflected its prominence. The wealthiest towns sported *flamines* not only of ruling emperors but of a row of *divi*, while the less notable had only generic ones, *nudi dicti*.<sup>162</sup> Besides being an ornament to the person and the town, the *flamine* was also a career step toward the ultimate

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Alexander). One Diocletianic text from *Thala* (*CIL* 8.23291; *CIL* 8.11677) mentions construction to obtain the office of aedile, and an undated item from the same town records a project promised when holding it. Two undated statue bases (*AE* 1988.1116 *Thuburnica*, Sidi Ali Ben Kassem; *CIL* 8.14372, *Avedda*, Hr Bedd), mention construction by aediles (amphitheatre, a septizodium). There is no suggestion that any but the Diocletianic building was raised to obtain office.

<sup>159</sup> According to Duncan-Jones 1963: 168, 600 decurions received one *denarius* at the dedication ceremonies of a building at *Thuburbo Maius*: *IL Afr.* 266: [---] *max(imo) Brittan(nico) pontif(ici) max(imo) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XI [---] / [--- decuri]onib(us) n(umero) CCC CCC denarios sing[ulos] ---*. The number may perhaps more plausibly be 300, followed by 300 *denarii*.

<sup>160</sup> The close tie between priesthoods and local politics is underlined by Rives 1995: 48-9, who notes that annual assignments are unknown to Roman religious practices. The *flamines* should be seen as municipal posts, and this is also how they consistently appear in the epigraphic record.

<sup>161</sup> See Ladjimi Sebaï 1990 for a study on female *flamines*. On the African *flamine* in general, Bassignano 1974; Pflaum 1976.

<sup>162</sup> On the number and roles of the *flamines*, Arnaldi 2010. Only the largest and richest towns had priesthoods dedicated to *divi*. When no particular emperor is named for a *flamen*, it is assumed that the assignment was to the ruling emperor(s).



Fig 6. An inscription from *Numluli* (CIL 8.26121), a *civitas* paired with a *pagus* of Carthage, which includes many standard elements. The supplement shows the builder to be uncommonly generous. He is not entirely typical in that he is already a member of the council of Carthage, but the flaminates of his son and wife are not costly, and must have been held in *Numluli*.

*[I]ovi Optimo Maximo Iunoni Reginae Minervae Augustae sacrum. | [P]ro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M. Aureli Antonini Aug(usti) Armeniaci Medici Part(hici) max(im)i pont(ificis) max(im)i trib(unicia) pot(estate) XXIII imp(eratoris) V co(n)s(ulis) III p(atris) p(atriciae) liberorumq(ue) eius totiusque domus divinae | [L.] Memmius Pecuarius Marcellinus cum suo et L. Memmi Marcelli Pecuarii decurionis c(oloniae) I(uliae) K(arthaginis) flaminis divi Nervae designati filii sui nomine templum Capitoli liberalitate sua | [f]aciendu[m] ex HS XX mil(ibus) n(ummum) patriae suae pago et civitati Numlulitanae promississet et ob honorem flamonis Iuniae Saturninae uxoris suae ex decreto utriusque ordinis HS IIII m(ilia) n(ummum) in id | opus [e]rogass[et] multiplicata pecunia solo suo extruxit et marmoribus et statuīs omniq(ue) cultu exornavit itemq(ue) dedicavit ob quam dedicationem decurionibus utriusq(ue) ordinis sportulas | item populo epulum et gymnasium dedit praeterea exigente annona frumenta quantacumq(ue) habuit populo multo minore pretio quam tunc erat benignissime praestitit item ludos scaenicos et gymnasia adsidue dedit.*

“Consecrated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Iuno Regina, and Minerva Augusta. For the health of the Emperor Caesar M. Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, greatest conqueror of Armenia, Media and Parthia, pontifex maximus, 14 times tribune, 5 times imperator, 3 times consul, father of the realm, and his children and entire divine household, *L. Memmius Pecuarius Marcellinus* decurion of the Julian colony of Carthage, *flamen* designate of the deified Nerva, promised to the *pagus* of the *patria* and to the *civitas*, in the name of his son, that a Capitoline temple be raised by his generosity out of 20,000 *nummi*, and for the flamine of his wife Iunia Saturnina, on the decree of both orders stipulating a sum of 4,000 *nummi* to this end, he built it on his land for still more money and decorated it with marbles and statues and all the ornaments, and also dedicated it. At the dedication he distributed money gifts to the members of both curias and gave food and gymnastic games to the people, and furthermore when grain was scarce offered what he had to the people at a far lower price than that current, and often gave stage and gymnastic games.”

goal for ambitious local elites: to enter the *ordo* of Carthage. Carthaginian decurions constitute the one exception to the invisibility of the more humble councilors: even the lowest levels easily trumped a complete *cursus* in the smaller towns, and families in the hinterland jockeyed for entry into this illustrious group.<sup>163</sup> Once achieved, it was duly flaunted: any connection to Carthage was paraded and used as an argument in favor of one's own inclusion into what in many ways resembles the senate in relation to the *domi nobiles* of Republican Italy. The many *ob honorem* building inscriptions, the by far largest subset of my sample, thus represent physical traces of precisely this moment in the careers of aspiring Africans, that last required local step before the much harder competition at the center of the region could commence. The fancier the town, the more expensive the offices; a career at Carthage required several times the sums of the small towns of its hinterland, and only the most affluent could attempt one.<sup>164</sup> That ambition was not always supported by means is indicated by the increasing number of texts toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. recording promises to build for office – effectively loans against a (hopefully) more affluent future – which were not realized. Frequently, the obligation to fulfill these rather extravagant promises passed onto descendants.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Christophe Hugoniot 2006, esp. 394-7, in a comprehensive article on the Carthaginian nobility, describes joining its *ordo* as the crowning of a career. He offers numerous examples, most from the *pertica* but one as far as *Thamugadi*. More examples in Bel Kahia Karoui 2010, and Jacques 1984, esp. p. 237. All underline the extreme prestige of positions at Carthage and that they were not easy to attain. The lower priesthoods there, held before reaching decurion status, counted as higher than the *flaminate* in a small town like *Thugga*.

<sup>164</sup> Duncan-Jones 1974 chapters 3-4. Hugoniot 2006: 398-400. The earliest item that specifies money spent (*IL Afr.* 384, Trajan) comes from Carthage, recording more than 90,000 HS, which is far beyond the cost of a *flaminate* in its hinterland (e.g. 10,000 HS at *Musti*). Carthaginian offices were among the most expensive in the empire.

<sup>165</sup> They appear during the “boom” years of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. and become common under Septimius Severus, such as *CIL* 8.1482, works at the Saturn temple promised for office and finished by the city, using money provided by descendants. See also at *Musti* (*CIL* 8.1577), an arch built by the

The emphasis in most of the *ob honorem* inscriptions on sums paid, often itemized with great precision, brings out the contract nature of this brand of inscriptions. Sums are frequently stated to be paid in excess of the requirement for office, and it is far from clear at all times either how much was actually spent or what portion of it went to career advancement, or to the building projects themselves, for the most part entirely overshadowed by the more mundane parts of the text. These often specify also sums paid to the commonweal by older relatives, both for and in excess of career requirements. This manner of overshooting is often treated as “true” euergetism (or sheer bragging) as opposed to the sums required for office, which in a sense were public funds, but I would suggest that excess spending often had the more concrete purpose of promoting the careers of additional family members. Names of relatives are frequently included in the inscriptions, usually with the term *in nomine*, and I would suggest that these were entitled to draw upon these funds to fulfill their own obligations for office. Many texts explicitly state that the builder paid extra to promote the career of a relative.<sup>166</sup> Contributions by deceased relatives were not just reiterated as proof of the magnanimity of the family, but could be drawn upon by descendants, at least for prestige if not in a more concrete sense. The fact that the texts are at times placed in awkward positions where they are not readily legible suggests that the

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son-in-law of an anonymous man who promised it for office. Scholars disagree on the precise significance of the practice of *pollicitatio* and *adiectio*, but it is clear that it implies taking on enterprises beyond one’s current resources. Saastamoinen 2008a: 269-288 sums up the debate, noting that several builders were not very eager to fulfill their obligations. Laws concerning public construction are collected in chapter 50.10 of the *Digest*, with 50.10.5 regulating how much interest was to be paid by the heirs on works unfulfilled (6%).

<sup>166</sup> E.g. *CIL* 8.25808 (*Furnos Minus*, Msaadine, Caracalla): ...*Sentius Felix Repostus ob honorem fili sui L(uci) Senti Felicis Repostiani fl(amonii) p(er)p(etui) sive XI p[rimatus] | et mag(isterii) non administrati sua pecunia fecit*. Saastamoinen 2008a: 260 is puzzled by the *in nomine* phrases, which he call “honor sharing,” and he suggests that the persons mentioned represent legally incompetent individuals.

contract nature, the significance of committing the transaction to stone, may have played a larger part than bragging for this particular brand of inscriptions.<sup>167</sup> The documentary aspect of the texts may be a contributing factor to why these buildings were inscribed in stone in the first place, seeing that many equally important ones never were. The persons mentioned are always close family members, and family tactics loom large in *ob honorem* construction generally. Every penny spent was carefully noted, publicized, and utilized to advance its position.<sup>168</sup>

The same structure was often exploited by multiple generations. A shrine to *Fortuna* at *Musti* was initially ordered by *C. Iulius Galba* through his will, the project undertaken by his cousin *L. Iulius Rogatus Kappianus* – who added funds toward his own flamine – together with his three brothers, to be completed and dedicated by the nephew of *Kappianus* together with his own son. If this represents the completion of an unfinished item, other examples imply that family conditioned the choice of object also when no obligations obtained, as in the many inscriptions from the temple of *Caelestis* at *Thugga*, which are all extensions of an ancestral project.<sup>169</sup> The example from *Musti* above shows a man restoring the temple portico of an

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<sup>167</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 23 on the sometimes small letter size on epistyles that were elevated some meters off the ground, which would have made the texts well nigh illegible.

<sup>168</sup> Some examples among many, all from *Thugga*, two of which likely pertain to the the same project: *ILAfr.* 538: *G. Seditus Hon[oratus] Afr[icanus a]vita et | [p]aterna [opera cons]um[mavit et] dedic[avit]*; *CIL* 8.26602: *C(ai) Iuli Martialis Catapala[ae] fl(aminis) perp(etui) nepotes et / heredes avita opera / consummaverunt et ded(icaverunt)*; *CIL* 8.26602a-b: *[---] fl(amen) perp(etuus) duplicata summa honorari[a] flamina]t(us) extruere solo privato coeperat C. Iulius Hon[nora]tus [Ca]tapalian[us] Aelianus ---] | [---] M. Iuli Rogatiani Catapaliani fl(aminis) perp(etui) [sua pecu]nia perfecerunt et omni cultu exornatum dedicave[runt] C[---]*.

<sup>169</sup> Seven inscriptions from the same sanctuary: *CIL* 8.26457-62, *Dougga* 1 p. 125. Another from *Uchi Maius* (Hr Douamis, *CIL* 8.26400) records how a son restored a temple built by his father.



ancestor, and there are several similar examples.<sup>170</sup> A sanctuary often became associated with a particular family, who could use it to further the position both of its individual members and the family as a whole. These examples are fairly typical – unquestionably, the item most frequently built by a local magistrate is a temple, to the point of overshadowing all others. In 80% of the cases where a private individual builds, and the object built is known, the project belongs to a sanctuary. The predominance of temples is more strongly felt in the Northeast than the other two regions, but it is a difference of nuance, not essence – temples are by far the most frequent object built by private individuals in the entire area, if less often explicitly for office in the “periphery.” Temple inscriptions were actually even more dominant – they are disfavored in the record for a number of reasons. Fragmentary items that mention porticoes and which are now referred to the “public works” category likely more often than not pertain to shrines, as do the majority of the porticoes in texts complete enough to tell – There are 7 securely civic porticoes attested in my material, against 305 temples.<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, unless an *aedes* is specifically mentioned, shrines to Neptune have been categorized as *nymphaea*, which I have listed as public works. It seems that a disproportionately large share of construction activity associated with sanctuaries

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<sup>170</sup> E.g. *CIL* 8.25430 from *Matera* (Mateur, undated): [---] *a Nabira avia eorum* | [---] *ituerat vetustate di[lapsum(?)]* | [---] *uris a fundamentis* | [---] *cu]m gradibus ampliavi(t)* | [---] *VIII mil(ia) sua*.

<sup>171</sup> For arches and porticoes as parts of sanctuaries, e.g. *CIL* 8.15578 (*Musti*): [---] *m suum templo sua impensa exstruxit et ob memor[iam ---]* | *IVII donavit et arcum cum parietibus coniunctis et porticus INI[---]* | ... Common in sanctuaries are also basilicas and cisterns, e.g. *AE* 1992.1817 (*Thugga*): ... *civitas Thignicensis templum et basilicam et porticus et / cisternam et custodiam sua pec(unia) fac(ienda) cur(avit)*. An item that would have been counted as public works had it not been for the findspot in a sanctuary is the portico raised at Hr Belda (*CIL* 8.27432). Few inscriptions can however be checked back against archaeology. An example of a likely misattributed text is an undated fragment from *Sucubi* (Brighita, *CIL* 8.794): [---] *a f(undamento?) porticum basilica et CET[---]* | [---] *viro constituit perfecit [---]*. An arch dating to Caracalla from *Vazi Sarra* (*CIL* 8.23749) is likely the entrance gate to a sanctuary.

occasioned an inscription, not only grand investments but many small additions such as a column or a staircase as well.<sup>172</sup>

This might have come across as evidence of astounding piety were it not for the prosaic contract style of the texts with which the projects were announced. This is not to exclude that religiosity factored into the erection of these shrines, but it does not appear to have motivated the inscriptions, which deal with money, family and career – they record the fulfillment of a duty to the town council, not the deity. Very few texts express pious sentiments, and those that do are invariably exceptions in other respects as well. Other media, such as votive altars, were likely the vehicle through which to make such statements. Often, the deity dedicated to is not even mentioned, and when it is, the builder is more prominently featured. Building projects dedicated to multiple gods are often listed in the same texts, and even secular buildings.<sup>173</sup> It is not a rule that a shrine was erected by a priest of the same cult; had it been, there would have been far more imperial shrines in evidence, as the majority of the builders were *flamines*.<sup>174</sup> The absence from the record of the more popular Roman cults such as Isis or Serapis, or almost any deity with a Berber name, also raises an eyebrow. The few mentions in the texts of Berber or non-Romanized Punic deities tend to coincide with the few pious formulas (such as *iussu dei*), and these shrines

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<sup>172</sup> For small contribution to temples, see above p. 65, esp. n. 150. Saastamoinen 2008a: 152 suggests that this precision was caused by the objects being too small to hold the texts, which, being separate from the structures, had to be highly specific. I am more inclined to understand them as publicly posted confirmations, officially approved.

<sup>173</sup> E.g., four texts that boast the construction of both a temple to Mercury and a macellum (*CIL* 8.26482-4, 26530, *Thugga*, Commodus). See also the *Musti* inscription above, p. 8 fig. 1.

<sup>174</sup> Exceptions exist, such as priests restoring temples to their deities at *Thuburbo Maius*, and a similar instance from *Cincari* (Souhilia, *IL Afr.* 484). Le Glay 1990 notes that almost all temples are built by *flamines* and for office, and that piety is likely not the main factor that motivates their erection, although he does not exclude that it played a part. Saastamoinen 2008a: 4-6, 105 rejects that piety informed the texts, and emphasizes their role as recording acts of euergetism.

are never raised *ob honorem*.<sup>175</sup> Those that are tend to be dedicated to the leading pair of the Punic pantheon, Saturn and Caelestis, Roman pantheon deities (no doubt often grafted upon Punic ones), and imperial virtues.<sup>176</sup> Not all manner of sanctuaries appear thus to have been raised *ob honorem* (and as a consequence, inscribed), but mainly those that were seen to raise the profile of a town, which is the case in particular for temples with imperial connotations and for Saturn and Caelestis, whose sanctuaries were often quite extravagant, as the two complexes at *Thugga*. Inscriptions on temples do not thus give a full picture of the religious life of the African towns, but only of those elements of it which formed part of the process of elite competition.

The tendency toward inscribing temple construction became ever stronger toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., peaking under Septimius Severus and Caracalla during whose tenures well nigh all texts in these, the largest subsamples of my material, concern either temples or the second most common category, honorific arches, which are frequent in the African towns. Most of them play the role of gates in imaginary (or wooden) city walls – hardly any town in my region was fortified before the Justinianic wars. Others straddle streets within the cities or form entrances to

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<sup>175</sup> On the rarity of religiosity in the inscriptions, Wesch-Klein 1990: 42. At *Masciliana* (Hadjeb el Aioun) in the southwestern outskirts of Byzacena, a procurator restored a temple in observance of an oracular command (*AE* 2007.1712). From *Magifa* in the same area comes a highly unusual dedication (*ILAlg.* 1.2977), which not only expresses religious enthusiasm but honors Berber deities. The shrine was not costly, perhaps a small chapel only: *Diis Magifae Augg(ustis) Q. T(---) Politicus simulacra deorum n(umero) V | Masidenis et Thililuae et Sugganis et Iesdanis et Masiddice et templum | a fundamentis ex sua pecunia fecit ex SS VIII (milibus) n(ummum) it(em)q(ue) d(e)d(icavit) capit<e> viso ipsis atpetentibus cum | suis omnibus v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) a(nimo). B(onis) b(ene) m(alis) b(ene)!* See also a dedication to Aesculapius *iussu domini* at *Thuburbo Maius* (*ILPBardo* 325) which Saastamoinen calls heterogeneous (2008a: 66); another to Venus Erucina at *Madauros* (*ILAlg.* 1.2069) *ex viso*.

<sup>176</sup> Wesch-Klein 1990: 24 provides a list of deities built for. Saturn is honored twice as often as any other god, followed by Mercury, Aesculapius, Caelestis, the Capitoline triad, Ceres, Fortune, Pluto/Dis and Venus. Tellus, Neptune and Liber Pater occur but less frequently. The majority of native deities attested, including Bacax who had a very well frequented sanctuary at *Thibilis* (Announa), do not feature in building inscriptions but are known through votives alone.

a forum or temple precinct. They could thus mark civic boundaries, but for the most part they functioned as a grandiose form of statue bases.<sup>177</sup> They pale in comparison to temples, making up some 10% of all inscriptions where the object is known, but they are the only category besides shrines to form a substantial subsample. Like temples, they are usually built by local men and women, often *ob honorem*. Also like temples, they are underrepresented within the sample, as the object built is rarely spelled out – they can for the most part be identified only when the inscription is found in context.<sup>178</sup> Other categories of structures have been bundled to form any kind of bulk, yet all items together under the “public works” label come to 9%, those termed “entertainment” to 8%, while “infrastructure” is so slim a category as to be negligible (2%). To treat subtypes of structures within these groups individually would obscure them almost entirely. Under the “public works” label, fora and porticoes come to c. 1.5% each – if including all types of builders and counting even the most doubtful cases – while no other type reaches even 1%.<sup>179</sup> Among entertainment structures, about half are baths (of which a third were raised by private

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<sup>177</sup> Most African arches are the works of private individuals with a few raised by towns, on the same pattern as statues, if on a grander scale. Saastamoinen 2008a: 146 likens them to honorific statues, a similarity brought out by *CIL* 8.1314 from *Thignica* (Aïn Tounga), a text which honors two men for having raised an arch. The verb with which their act is described is *posuerunt*, which is not normally used for construction but only for statues or altars. See Saastamoinen 2004 for how to distinguish bases and altars from construction.

<sup>178</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 43. Texts posted on arches tend to be arranged in a particular way, and quite a few texts now categorized as “object unknown” are likely to have derived from arches.

<sup>179</sup> Items listed as public works by private individuals include: 6 forum installations, of 9 in total (*CIL* 8.15497, *CIL* 8.26524, *CIL* 8.26593, *CIL* 8.25532-3, *ILAlg.* 1.2120, *CIL* 8.24095); 5 porticoes (of 7), one likely 4<sup>th</sup> c. (*CIL* 8.805, *IL Afr.* 271, *CIL* 8.26527, *IL Afr.* 196, *CIL* 8.16538); 3 macella (of 4) (*CIL* 8.26483-4, *CIL* 8.12353, *ILAlg.* 1.2052a); finally 2 nymphaea (of 4), one where the emendation *fons* is dubious (*AE* 2006.1762, *AE* 1940.17). No other building type has more than one showing by any builder except curias (3 in total, one by a private man, *CIL* 8.24095). Among single items by private individuals are one septizodium (*CIL* 8.14372, from a statue base), one paving (*CIL* 8.23880) and one horologium (*AE* 2006.1755). No public works but one forum addition and a nymphaeum were built *ob honorem*. Furthermore, many of these projects are the works of high status outsiders, not local officeholders; see below pp. 86-87.

individuals), and there are roughly as many theatres by private men and women (c. 1.5% each).<sup>180</sup> Correct identification of the object is doubtful for several instances in both categories, some are likely Late Antique, and many are known only indirectly through statue bases. To specify the structures within these groups might seem like splitting hairs, seeing how few they are overall, but it is I believe never stressed enough just how bad a fit the record of building inscription is with the actual built landscape of the towns as we see them. The graph produced by Saastamoinen for all Africa gives a very different impression, with only 18% temples and far more significant showings of other categories, which reflects a more accurate representation in inscriptions of public construction in Numidia and the Mauretaniae – it should be noted that the vast bulk of the temples are found in the Northeast, making them less dominant still in the Western provinces if this area is excluded from the calculation. It is of critical importance thus not to transpose impressions given by the Northeastern material on the whole of North Africa and vice versa. The same goes for the drop in frequency after Caracalla, which is by no means as strongly felt (if at all) in other African provinces. The practices of inscribing are simply not the same, and should not be analyzed as though they were. Scholars have labored to explain the absence of texts mentioning other structures than sanctuaries with “natural” causes: that they were already built, did not need replacing, or were deemed inadequate for the status of the

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<sup>180</sup> Most baths builders are unknown, but those identified are high status patrons rather than locals. Baths by private individuals: *AE* 1975.880 (*Ureu*, Bordj Ouraou, late 3rd c.), *CIL* 8.23880 (*Bisica Lucana*, Bischka, undated); *CIL* 8.23964-5 (*Municipium Aurelium Commodianum*, Bou Cha, Diocletian or later); *camera* and mosaic, *CIL* 8.1323 (*Tuccabor*, Tukabur, undated); *IL Afr.* 454 (*Bulla Regia*, c. 200 CE); *CIL* 8.23293 (*Thala*, undated but late). Theatres: *IL Afr.* 320 (*Curubis*), *CIL* 8.26528, 8.26606-7 (*Thugga*), *CIL* 8.5365-6 (*Calama*), all under Marcus; small additions, *ILTun.* 460 (*Ammaedara*, Septimius Severus); *IL Alg.* 1.2121 (*Madauros*, undated).

builders who wished to make a mark.<sup>181</sup> None of these stand up to scrutiny. First, a faithful representation of the proportions of architectural features in the built landscape is out of the question. The towns in the study area were fully equipped with structures that could be but were not as a rule inscribed, among the more notable the many finely paved streets and (often multiple) fora, by no means sufficiently represented in epigraphy.<sup>182</sup> As mentioned above, even tiny towns often had more than one public bath, and many had amphitheatres, of which not a single one has produced a building inscription.<sup>183</sup> That these projects would not be associated with the desired prestige is also out of the question: they were the most high profile projects a town could boast, and also the most expensive, yet not a single bath is built or restored *ob honorem*.<sup>184</sup> That they were already built and/or did not require maintenance is also incorrect. The majority of entertainment structures known through epigraphy tend to be late, showing there

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<sup>181</sup> E.g. Wesch-Klein 1990: 25 suggests that most of the towns' equipment of public works was already built, and that arches were a suitably glamorous alternative. See also Saastamoinen 2008a: 43, Chart 7. In his sample, including all of North Africa, the large "unknown" category (c. 30% of my sample) is treated as two, one of fragments, one of texts which do not state the object (the larger share). In my sample the relation is the inverse, with a far larger share of fragments, most with the appearance of temple inscriptions; no building type is "hidden" among them. Undated temples are as frequent as dated temples.

<sup>182</sup> Although a common project for Italian benefactors, only two pavings of city streets are recorded in my sample, one of which by a private man (*CIL* 8.23880, *Bisica Lucana*, undated). In African epigraphy, *stravit* pertains mainly to sanctuaries (as in *CIL* 8.16459, Ellès, undated).

<sup>183</sup> The amphitheatres at *Uthina* and *Thuburnica* are known from statue bases, see above n. 145. Some few of the many uninscribed entertainment structures: amphitheatres at *Carthage*, *Utica*, and *Theveste*, two at *Thysdrus*; theatres at *Simitthus*, *Hippo Regius*, *Thignica* and *Utica*, circuses at *Utica* and *Carthage*. Baths recorded in the catalogue by Jouffroy 1986: 227-228, 273 are almost all known from archaeology only.

<sup>184</sup> Closest to the formula used for construction by local magistrates are two undated texts from *Municipium Aurelium Commodianum* (*CIL* 8.23964-5) describing how a *Magnilianus* and son built additions to a bath. He was a local man and former *flamen*, but served at the time of construction as *curator rei publicae*, an imperial office. It dates at the very earliest to Diocletian.

was scope for improvement even in the “crisis” years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c.<sup>185</sup> Moreover, baths in particular required frequent refurbishments that would have provided numerous opportunities to make contributions even by those of relatively modest means. Few bath restorations are in evidence, while temples are restored, replaced and added to continuously, a process that only one or two fora bear witness to among other structures, even though temples were not (as I am aware) subject to any massive wear and tear that would necessitate such attention beyond other building types. To claim that the communities needed no further public works past the 1<sup>st</sup> c. is to miss the point – utility is not the operating factor behind the construction documented through epigraphy, which tends rather toward the ornamental. The needs to be met were rather those of a small elite, for whom the prestige of erecting an imperial shrine – even when the town already sported one – was apparently more essential than posing as the builder of a cistern or a street.<sup>186</sup>

This strongly suggests that different epigraphic practices applied to different types of structures. The impression that the epigraphic record is not a faithful guide to construction activity in the towns is strengthened by considering the rare texts mentioned above that record the activities of aediles, of which all date either to Augustus or Severus Alexander. Their dates straddle the “golden years,” which may reflect a continuous practice of aedilitarian activity, for the most part invisible through the epigraphic medium. Their projects, though privately funded, are not presented as for office but seem part of the routine handling of their duties, a process

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<sup>185</sup> Of the most numerous category, baths (counting all manner of builders), 1 dates to Marcus, 3 restorations (out of 4 in total) to Septimius Severus, plus 1 which likely dates to c. 200, 2 to Gallienus, while 7 are late 3<sup>rd</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup>. c., while 3 baths are undated.

<sup>186</sup> For example, the small town *Sua* already had a shrine to *Fortuna*, raised in 166-169 (*CIL* 8.1310), which did not stop a private man with his sons from erecting another soon after, in 183-184 (*CIL* 8.1311) – either an embellishment of the earlier, presented with all the pomp of an *ex novo* item, or a (rather superfluous) second shrine.

which apparently did not occasion an inscription. Moreover, they tend to concern objects other than temples.<sup>187</sup> The tendency for structures other than temples and arches to date later or earlier than the “boom” years of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. is in fact general.<sup>188</sup> Rather than critically low construction of such objects during the supposed *floruit* of the province, I would argue that what prompted inscribing was not construction *per se*, which was continuous, but the fulfillment of requirements to obtain office, and that this process was specifically associated with shrines and honorifics such as arches and imperial statues. Very few public works are presented as erected *ob honorem* (precisely two: a forum and a nymphaeum, the former undated, the latter Gallienic, and presented as a temple to Neptune), and among entertainment structures only three theatre works, two of which overshot the cost of office by so much that the flaminates seem not the main motivation – in the case of *Madauros*, 375,000 HS where 10,000 would have sufficed.<sup>189</sup> As I will argue below, these were not built for local flaminates, but the builders had their sights set on Carthage, and their projects fall outside of the category of strictly local builders. The flaminates may however be what prompted inscribing: the majority of entertainment structures are known only

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<sup>187</sup> The Augustan example (*CIL* 8.978) lists no less than 5 public works: a pluteus, two scholae, a horologium, and a street. The 3<sup>rd</sup> c. examples (both included in the counts above) list a stone labrum with lead water conduits in a temple of Mercury at *Giufi* (*CIL* 8.23991), and aediculae in the circus at *Thugga* (*CIL* 8.1492, *CIL* 8.1486 and *CIL* 8.26643) – the only mention of construction in a circus in any inscription. Two undated statues from *Thuburnica* and *Avedda* praise their honorees for raising an amphitheatre and a septizodium.

<sup>188</sup> 1st c. texts more often mention items that are unusual during the “boom” years; e.g. paving (*IL Afr.* 558, *Thugga*, Tiberius; *AE* 1951.82, *Hippo Regius*, Vespasian). 3rd c. forum works are attested under Severus Alexander, Gallienus and Probus; see above n. 179. The one private curia dates to Probus (*CIL* 8.24095, *Pupput*), one built by the town dates to Maximinus Thrax (*CIL* 8.757 *Gales*, Karrouba). A third, by an unknown builder, is late (*CIL* 8.12242, *Sucubi*). The one exception are theatres, of which 4 out of 5 date to Marcus. These projects belonged to builders of higher status than the locals treated in this section, and will be discussed in more detail below.

<sup>189</sup> A forum at *Bulla Regia* (*CIL* 8.25532-3, undated); a nymphaeum at *Thignica* (*AE* 2006.1762, Gallienus); theatres at *Thugga* (*CIL* 8.26528, 8.26606-7, Marcus), *Madauros* (*IL Alg.* 1.2121, undated), and additions for a mere 5,000 HS (*ILTun.* 460, *Ammaedara*, Septimius Severus).



indirectly, through statue bases. This is true in large measure also of public works, such as 2 out of 6 fora constructed by private men, 1 out of 3 macella, and the one private curia.

What one can take away from this has to do with the way the medium was employed, with far-reaching consequences for how it may be interpreted. It was never systematically applied to public construction, not even the most expensive, high profile projects – if these were inscribed, this was done in a material that has not survived. What makes up the “boom” record was a highly particular type of building activity. When the frequency of building inscriptions drop after Caracalla, this does not indicate a loss of the towns’ viability, but a drop in the construction, or the recording of construction, of sanctuaries and arches in the Northeast, by a *flamen perpetuus*, to obtain this honor for self and family. Other objects do not show the same trajectory.

### *The bigger fish*

The mass of *flamines* and the few *duumviri* who make up the bulk of the epigraphic sample may have towered over the great mass of African town dwellers in terms of wealth and influence, yet they represent far from the strongest elites in North Africa. In the majority of cases their families held only local positions. Hardly any of them are senators, and the few equestrians in evidence represent fairly low – and recent – grades, occupying none but local posts.<sup>190</sup> However, among the few items treated above that bear witness to construction of other structures than temples and arches, a different stratum of builders of quite different caliber can be perceived, belonging to the more powerful African elites. Their behavior, both in terms of building and in presenting their

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<sup>190</sup> Wesch-Klein 1990: 43 comments on the rarity of senators or higher equites among the builders, so few as to be almost nonexistent. She explains it with a lack of emotions for the by now distant home towns, in favor of bigger arenas (such as Carthage).

works, is quite different from that of local magistrates, and warrants (I would argue) separate treatment. As a group, their impact on the architectural landscape of North Africa went far beyond what the scanty epigraphic record of their activities suggests. Their contributions represent precisely those most prestigious structures that are so rare among the *flamines*, and in particular entertainment structures, including all known amphitheatres and theatres, and most baths.<sup>191</sup> The sheer scale of these projects overshadows the *ob honorem* projects by a wide margin, as seen in a recent statue base from *Uthina* recording a sum spent of 350,000 HS.<sup>192</sup> Other projects include a theatre at Calama by a woman of a senatorial family (at 400,000 HS), the theatre at *Madauros* mentioned above, and further theatres at *Thugga* and *Curubis*, at huge cost, by well-connected families. At *Ureu*, baths were restored by a senator and patron, and at *Bulla Regia* a patroness, daughter of a well known senator, built lavish baths. Also attributable to this social layer are the more extensive public works, including a forum and a curia (one of two in the entire sample and the only one private) at *Pupput* by a patrician and patron, a forum at *Madauros* for 200,000 HS, a portico at *Thugga* for 150,000 HS, and another at *Avita Bibba* by a Carthaginian nobleman.<sup>193</sup> Common to all of the builders is, beyond their high rank, that they

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<sup>191</sup> Of the 7 baths that show involvement of private individuals, 2 are known from undated statue bases to patrons, 2 are late 3rd - early 4th c. (a restoration by a patron on the one hand, *ex novo* construction by a *curator rei publicae* on the other), 1 is an undated bath mosaic, 1 a late fragment which offers little information, and 1 a Gallienic collaboration between city and some of the decurions who paid for the mosaics. The first 4 all safely belong to the category here treated, while the rest are heterogeneous or obscure.

<sup>192</sup> A statue posted in the amphitheatre at *Uthina* to the son of the donor, under Hadrian (*AE* 2004.1821). On its date and interpretation: Ben Abdallah *et al.* 1998, Christol 2011: 290-291. Duncan-Jones 1974, in chapters 3-4 on the costs of African buildings, puts theatres at c. 300,000, and amphitheatres generally higher.

<sup>193</sup> *Calama* theatre by *Annia Aelia Restituta*, *CIL* 8.5365-6; *Thugga* theatre by *P. Marcius Quadratus* *CIL* 8.26606-7; *Curubis* theatre *ILAfr.* 320; *Ureu* baths by *L. Octavius Aurelianus*

operate outside of the town itself, often holding office at Carthage. As mentioned above, the aristocracy of this town was of a whole different stature than the elites in the smaller towns. The cost of offices there was far higher – completing the *cursus honorum* at Carthage would require at least 100,000 HS, not counting euergetism.<sup>194</sup> An elite individual in a small town who wished to take on a Carthaginian career first had to complete the local *cursus*, then that at the metropolis, a feat few were wealthy enough to tackle.<sup>195</sup> Duncan-Jones remarks that the situation resembles that of Rome, with a massive concentration of wealth to a few families.<sup>196</sup> These tend to be senatorial, and although few are traceable through more than a couple of generations, it is clear that they maintain their positions throughout generations, often intermarrying. Among them are the *Pullaeni*, who have connections to *Thugga* and to *Uchi Maius*, the *Aradii*, *Caecilii*, *Calpurnii*, *Cornelii*, *Marcii*, *Memmii* and *Roscii*, later on the *Ceionii* and the *Anicii*.<sup>197</sup> Their networks span the entire province, and they tend to build in and be patrons of several towns, likely in proximity to estates held in the area. Corbier calls them an “African oligarchy,” living in Carthage but with abodes in the country as well.<sup>198</sup> No member of these grand families has been found among the tombs in the towns in which their buildings are attested. Even when the

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*Didasius* AE 1975: 880; baths by *Iulia Memmia* at *Bulla Regia* ILAfr. 454. Public works at *Pupput* CIL 8.24095; *Madauros* ILAlg. 1.2120; *Thugga* CIL 8.152461; *Avita Bibba* CIL 8.805.

<sup>194</sup> Hugoniot 2006: 398.

<sup>195</sup> Bel Kahia Karoui 2010: 1573 on the expensive double careers of Carthaginian *aediles*. One example among several is *L. Cosinius Primus* of *tribus Arnensi*, who went through a full career at *Cuicul*, and then embarked on a less illustrious one at Carthage.

<sup>196</sup> Duncan-Jones 1963: 165-6 describes the extreme differences in wealth among the African elites. More than half of the surplus wealth owned by the African aristocracy in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> c. was in the hands of very few families.

<sup>197</sup> Apart from the article by Hugoniot mentioned above, the seminal work is that of Corbier 1982, which includes a catalogue of the *gentes* and charts of their marriage unions. The families come both from veteran and native stock.

<sup>198</sup> Corbier 1982: 692. They sought to place their sons in service under the proconsul, as quaestors and legates preferably.

families have strong ties to the localities and likely derive from them, they are not locally defined, but operate on a regional level.<sup>199</sup> Outside the senatorial nobility, a few equestrian families are visible alongside them, making their way up the social scale, such as the *Petronii* at *Thuburbo Maius*, responsible for a still standing portico, or the already mentioned anonymous patron of *Curubis*.<sup>200</sup> The *Marcii* at *Thugga* reveal something of the social process undergone by ambitious local families. One scion, *P. Marcius Quadratus*, built a theatre under Marcus.<sup>201</sup> Three brothers of his are known, two of whom constructed the Capitolium. At least three of the four brothers were *flamines* at Carthage, and of the *Arnensi* tribe of that city. However, their father held only local positions at *Thugga* and was of the *Quirina* tribe – it seems the tribe was switched upon entering the council of Carthage.<sup>202</sup> The theatre was built explicitly to obtain the flamine of his *patria*, which has been interpreted as *Thugga*, but the only office mentioned in the text is his flamine of *divus* Vespasian at Carthage, and it seems far more likely that this is the position built for. If so, the *patria* in question is not the (as yet dependent) *Thugga*, but Carthage.<sup>203</sup> This would explain the massive contribution, incongruous with the norm for local *ob honorem* construction but more appropriate for entry into the highest elite of the province.

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<sup>199</sup> In some cases they appear to hold multiple citizenships, which can make it hard to determine where they originate from or reside, but Carthage is the best bet in these cases. See e.g. *AE* 1992.1800 from *Abbir Maius* and discussion by Gasco 2003: 231. On the elites of Carthage, Corbier 1982 and especially Hugoniot 2006 *passim*, on double citizenship in particular 391-392.

<sup>200</sup> *Thuburbo Maius*: *ILAfr.* 271. *Curubis*: *AE* 1908.162.

<sup>201</sup> See above n. 192.

<sup>202</sup> Statues in theatre to brothers, *flamines* at Carthage (*CIL* 8.26609, of *Divus Augustus*; *CIL* 8.26604, of *Divus Vespasianus*) and father (*CIL* 8.22605). Another instance of tribe transfer, from *Papiria* to *Arnensi*, is *CIL* 8.23069.

<sup>203</sup> Other texts describe *Thugga* as a *pagus patriae*, a subdivision of the *patria*, i.e. of Carthage. Contemporary references to a *pagus patriae* show this clearly, e.g. a portico dedication by Gabinius Felix Faustianus, *CIL* 8.26524: ... *pago patriae ded(it)*; also *CIL* 8.26482-3, under Commodus, by another ambitious family with positions at Carthage.

Once the proper level of wealth and commitment was demonstrated, the transition may have been smooth – Corbier suggests that rank distinctions were not jealously guarded by the African elites, and intermarriages between senators and equestrians were frequent within the limited group of powerful landowning families that mattered.<sup>204</sup>

If builders and patrons in the Northeast tend to be Carthaginians (or those that would be), in the West the direction of attention is slightly different, although the *modus operandi* is much the same. There, too, a network of grandees are active in towns across the region. They receive multiple honors in multiple generations, and they build the same spectacular items. The source of high social standing in the area is however less often Carthaginian offices, but the imperial administration. The strong presence of the *res privata* in the Western towns is mirrored in its elites, among whom procuratorial posts often make for roads to prominence.<sup>205</sup> Members of African senatorial families are active as builders in the area, but many are connected to Rome rather than to Carthage. One of the most famous benefactors in the area is *Iulia Memmia* (at *Bulla Regia*), whose father served as consul in 191. This town and its neighbors boast some very high patrons, often proconsuls, and it is matched in this respect by *Hippo Regius* and *Calama* (among the patrons of which is *Vibia Sabina*, daughter of Marcus Aurelius). The area exported

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<sup>204</sup> Corbier 1982: 692.

<sup>205</sup> An example is *T. Flavius Macer*, who completed a *cursus* at his native *Ammaedara* and continued to imperial posts, including the procuratorship of domains in the area of *Hippo Regius*. He is honored both there (*ILAlg.* 1.3992, by *conductores* of the *regio Hipponensis*) and at *Calama* (*CIL* 8.5351), where he is described as *municeps*. He may be identical to the builder in a fragmentary inscription from *Ammaedara*, *AE* 1999.1798. Another item at *Hippo Regius* is an aedicula dedicated to Hadrian by one *Panthera*, procurator of the *saltus* of the area. Also at *Sicca Veneria*, a procurator instituted a foundation for *collegia* of girls and boys (*CIL* 8.1641), and at *Bulla Regia* an equestrian quoted his *codicilli* from Marcus and Verus (*AE* 2005.25).

senators at higher rate than the rest of Africa.<sup>206</sup> It also exported intellectuals; the author Suetonius is honored as *flamen perpetuus* at *Hippo Regius*, which must have been an honorary position.<sup>207</sup> Cornelius Fronto hailed from Numidia, but his family was connected to the branch of the *Cornelii* and *Gabinii* active at *Madauros* and attested also at *Calama*, wealthy equestrians who are responsible for some spectacular acts of euergetism.<sup>208</sup>

These two *gentes* are well established in the Northeast as well, and perhaps their projects represent ambitions in that direction – the setup resembles closely that of the *Marcii* at *Thugga* – but if so, this is not spelled out. Although there are clearly interconnections – the *Memmi* of *Bulla Regia* hail from *Gigthis*, and are visible in honorifics both at *Vina* and at Carthage itself – Carthaginian office-holders are not visible in the West, and careers in the Western towns did not as a rule lead there. The *pertica* arrangement provided an opportunity to its small town elites that was not offered outside it; there is no indication that the less impressive Numidian metropoleis *Cirta* or *Sicca Veneria* created a comparable social dynamic within their dependent areas. Of Byzacena little is known; its major inland towns do not figure at all for this type of construction, and the towns where its strongest elites resided are silent in terms of epigraphy.<sup>209</sup> A base from

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<sup>206</sup> See Thèbert 1973 on the strong imperial connections of the towns in the region. *Bulla Regia*: the proconsul (CIL 8.25528); *Hippo Regius*: a *legatus pro praetore* dedicates to Claudius as patron (AE 1935.32), son of ex-consul of Italian senatorial family (CIL 8.5228); *Calama*: Vibia Sabina (CIL 8.5328) ex-consuls (CIL 8.5349, CIL 8.5356).

<sup>207</sup> AE 1953.73. One may also mention Apuleius, whose father was *flamen* at *Madauros*, Aurelius Victor, born in a small unknown town in the area, Lactantius, who received his education at *Sicca Veneria*, and Augustine, who hailed from *Thagaste*.

<sup>208</sup> The theatre at *Madauros* was built by *M. Gabinius Sabinus* for 375,000 HS, repaid by five statues to family members posted in the theatre (ILAlg. 1.2121, 2123-7). One of them was honored also for distribution of grain during famine (ILAlg. 1.2145). Another family member is attested as patron at *Calama* (CIL 8.5350).

<sup>209</sup> The only instances are a fragment from *Thala* (CIL 8.23923) that mentions baths, and a mosaic at *Sullethum* (AE 1968.610). Both are late, and neither name the builder.

*Hadrumentum* has helped trace some of the city's elite, showing that it was connected to the senatorial families of the Northeast, but beyond this little can be said.<sup>210</sup> There is certainly a host of major entertainment structures with which they could have been involved, such as the several amphitheatres at *Thysdrus*, or baths along the coast. The one inscription from the area that offers any information is telling enough; a base from *Pupput* to *Caelius Severus*, a consular and patron who restored the forum, the curia and the Capitolium. His name suggests African origin, as there are several high status *Caelii*.

The theatres by the *Marcii* and the *Gabinii-Cornelii* are among the few projects in this group known through building inscriptions, and in some ways their actions resemble those by local magistrates treated in the previous section, if on a superior scale. For the most part, however, in contrast to the construction of locals, the projects associated with this social stratum are not advertised, at least not in a medium that survives. Our knowledge of their projects stems almost exclusively from statues raised in gratitude by the communities where they built. Strictly speaking, these are not building inscriptions, and should thus not be included in this study. They are of obvious interest, however, and not the least so due to this very silence.<sup>211</sup> Not one of the more than 60 amphitheatres in North Africa has yielded so much as a fragment of a building inscription, with the consequence that the famous amphitheatre at *Thysdrus*, the fourth largest in the entire empire, cannot be dated.<sup>212</sup> The same generally holds for baths and for theatres – not

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<sup>210</sup> *CIL* 8.60, a dedication to *L. Terentius Aquila Grattianus*, quaestor of Africa, by a number of *amicii*. See Corbier 1982: 695.

<sup>211</sup> I have mapped them along with other projects, but have indicated in the catalogue when a structure is known only through indirect means. Few of these are dateable with enough precision to be included on the maps, and they have little impact on them.

<sup>212</sup> Dates suggested range from Septimius Severus to Diocletian, according to the bias of the author more than any good archaeological data. On the inside of each stone – so not meant to be

one bath is to be found among the standard formulas associated with locals building treated in the previous section.<sup>213</sup> The link between external patrons and entertainment structures is quite strong, suggesting that a good portion of those that have left no epigraphy – the overwhelming majority – should be attributed to this social stratum. Jouffroy associates such “grand travaux” with construction by the towns themselves, and that these carried the cost for some of them is not unlikely – three inscriptions in my sample frame a city as builder or restorer of baths, although one text is admittedly very doubtful – but most of what we have points to private individuals.<sup>214</sup> All known theatre works are private, as are the two amphitheatres that can be attributed to a person, and the one circus. Although I would be the first to warn against taking this as solid proof that all such structures were raised by high ranking patrons who resided in the grand ports, it at least shows that this was not uncommon.

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seen - are painted in red the letters *d p s c*, perhaps representing *d(e) p(ecunia) s(ua?) c(uravit)* (CIL 8.53), but in my opinion more likely related to the quarrying process. The only two amphitheatres that can be associated with a builder at all are those at *Uthina* (see above n. 145) and *Thuburnica* (AE 1988.1116). The latter text likely refers to embellishments only, seeing the modest sum of 30,000 HS involved. Wilkins 1988 and Christol 2011 both complain that inscriptions in any form are rare for amphitheatres, on statue bases or otherwise.

<sup>213</sup> Known only through honorifics are the theatre works at *Curubis*, *Calama*, and *Ammaedara*, the baths at *Bulla Regia* and *Ureu*, the curia and forum at *Pupput*, the septizodium at *Avedda*, macellum at *Municipium Aurelium Commodianum*, portico at *Avita Bibba*, and also some more minor public works. For references, see above nn. 178-9.

<sup>214</sup> Jouffroy 1986: 208. Gallienic baths at *Thubursicu Bure* (Tabursuq, *IL Afr.* 506), presented as by the city, with local decurions contributing to the mosaics and the proconsul and his legate (and son) performing the dedication. Restoration of the Southern baths at *Hippo Regius* (AE 1958.141), possible restoration at Carthage (CIL 8.12568). Saastamoinen 2008a: 232, following Duncan-Jones in assuming that the record faithfully reflects what was actually built, suggests these buildings were raised by central authorities, since so few can be associated with private persons. However, no text mentions any such imperial building project before Diocletian.



Such few building inscriptions as do exist for this social group are distinct from those of local magistrates, as seen in this rare example by a member of one of the wealthiest families of the Northeast, the *Pullaieni* of Carthage:

*Sex. Pullaienus Florus Caecil[ianus s(ua) p(ecunia) fecit?] | et Uchitanis Maioribus dono [dedit].*<sup>215</sup>

In contrast to the inscriptions by the townsfolk, no information on the person or career of *Sextus Pullaienus* is offered, even though he is known from bases to have held prestigious positions at Carthage; instead the wording includes an unusual euergetic flair by his donating the (regrettably unknown) item to the people of *Uchi Maius* as a gift. Presumably there was no need to advertise his career, as the scions of these powerful families must have been well known.<sup>216</sup> Even the rather wordy inscription of the theatre raised by the *Marcii*, the text that is the closest to the epigraphic practices of locals outlined above, mentions only his present (Carthaginian) title, includes no information on funding, and no family members.<sup>217</sup> Local details of this kind were

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<sup>215</sup> *CIL* 8.26267a: “Sex. Pullaienus Florus Caecilianus raised (it) out of his own money and gave it as a gift to the people of Uchi Maius.” He also built at *Pagus Suttuensis* (*CIL* 8.26419) and is honored as patron in the theatre at *Thugga* (*CIL* 8.26615) from where the family hails, according to Wesch-Klein 1990: 42 (although this is not established, but based on properties in the area). Gascou 1987: 103-4 relates that he held the priesthood of Ceres at Carthage under Hadrian.

<sup>216</sup> The silence extends to funding – larger buildings generally lack information on cost, as noted by Wesch-Klein 1990: 23. She explains it with the buildings demonstrating clearly how large the contributions were, and, a bit incongruously, that there was not much space on which to attach the text. Inscriptions recording the projects of locals were often quite long, even when recording the most modest contributions. These reflect a different, locally defined social process, for which a meticulous documentation of careers, names and money was relevant.

<sup>217</sup> The same is the case for the one project associated with this social stratum that concerns a temple, the Capitolium at *Thugga* raised by a pair of *Marcii* brothers (*CIL* 8.15513-4). The brief texts give only their names, and mention no statuses, expenses, careers, or earlier contributions by them or their ancestors. Yet one is known as a *flamen* of Carthage from a statue base (*CIL* 8.1494), far above the level of local notables and with career goals that go beyond the town.

not relevant for the type of construction that he was engaged in. Hugoniot describes the relation of the Carthaginian nobles to these small towns as a complex one. They owned land there; at times, like the *Marcii*, they had risen from there. The towns sought them as patrons, as they were the most powerful individuals within reach. He explains their building projects as a give-and-take; the townsfolk could support their ambitions at Carthage by working their connections in their favor, or by sending embassies.<sup>218</sup> One might, I believe, also see in these projects the fulfillment of some manner of requirements; perhaps the often repeated sum of c. 300,000 HS represented a threshold for a level of the Carthaginian nobility. Their ambitions, in any case, lay beyond the smaller communities themselves. Even so, their activities are closer to our traditional model of euergetism than those of the locals treated above, which often represented transforming a mandatory duty into a project by which to promote one's family and career. To label their activity "euergetism" might be questioned, especially seeing how little of either utility or popular appeal their works involved, and the almost complete absence of phrases that invoke the common good.<sup>219</sup> The community, beyond the uppermost elite, does not appear to have played a decisive part. By contrast, the projects associated with these grandees expressed a relation between population and builder, not only seen in the choice of objects with strong popular appeal, but spelled out in the inscription of Pullaienus, and seen also through the statue bases raised in reciprocation. There are no statue bases thanking the local notables for their temples.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Hugoniot 2006: 400. His example is *L. Octavius Felix Octavianus*, Carthaginian decurion and patron of *Furnos Minus* (Msaadine) who was a candidate for the aedileship, but it is not clear from the statue raised to him that he built anything there.

<sup>219</sup> Among those who do question that such construction should be counted as euergetism is Duncan-Jones 1974: 82-88, 147-9.

<sup>220</sup> The few exceptions invariably concern those of higher than local status: a decurion at Carthage, *CIL* 8.12569, the Capitolium of the *Marcii* mentioned in n. 216, a *sacerdos Africae*

If the assumption is correct that the entertainment structures so plentiful in the African towns should to at least some degree be associated with this social stratum, then its role is gravely underrepresented in epigraphy. As mentioned, the builders were likely broadcast in some form or other that has not survived, but the example of Pullaienus cautions against reconstructing such texts after the model of the local notables, with their tireless itemization of sums spent, families and careers. The construction of the *grandees* represents a different *genus* of activity, and was communicated in entirely different ways. The silence that surrounds them makes their activities hard to trace, and arguments as to their rise or demise difficult to sustain, but the few examples we have are spread fairly evenly over the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> c. There is a notable concentration of theatre works under Marcus, but among other types of structures there are several late examples, in spite of the fact that the medium through which we know about them – honorific statue bases – largely disappears, or ceases to include this type of information.<sup>221</sup> In any case, one can discern no such sharp drop after Caracalla as for the sanctuaries built by locals; there is no concentration of senatorial efforts to the peak years; in fact, the strongest record dates to the reign of Gallienus (supposedly the nadir of the crisis), and there is no lack of Late Antique city patronates.<sup>222</sup> To argue that such benefactions disappeared when the inscriptional record

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(the highest priestly position of the province) at *Limisa*, *CIL* 8.12039, and a senator and patron at *Pupput*, *CIL* 8.24095. The two latter bases honor them also for public works and baths.

<sup>221</sup> Such as the curia attested at *Pupput* under Probus (*CIL* 8.24095) or the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. baths at *Ureu* (*AE* 1975.880). Lepelley 1997: 337-342 and *passim* argues strongly for their persistence through the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. and beyond. The patroness who built the theatre at *Calama*, *Annia Aelia Restituta*, has been dated to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c (although not accepted by all), and in the same town another benefactress donates an even higher sum to a project under Diocletian.

<sup>222</sup> Whether these still entailed construction is impossible to determine since late statue bases no longer included this type of information. For the more than 74 late patronates in Africa known through honorifics, Krause 1987 (ref. taken from Lepelley 1997: 341). Saastamoinen 2008a: 7 cautions against including data from statue bases in quantifying essays, seeing how the use of the

dwindled to a trickle is thus problematic, as they were never part of the phenomenon that made up its bulk. The silence goes further - it seems the higher the position, the less one featured in inscriptions (at least beyond Carthage, where, one may assume, the lion's share of the efforts to impress took place). It is no coincidence that the two projects known from actual building inscriptions which most resemble the inscriptions of locals refer to the two lowest ranking patrons in the sample. Furthermore, the patrons attested as builders belong, as a rule, only to the lower rungs of the Carthaginian nobility.<sup>223</sup> The higher officials in the administration of Carthage are rarely active as builders in the smaller towns, in spite of being those most able to afford it. The same is true for the higher imperial magistrates, to be treated in the next chapter.

#### *Building inscriptions on estates*

These African nobles were large scale landowners, a circumstance that has not generated much epigraphic data beyond the occasional border stone or toponym.<sup>224</sup> Properties in the vicinity of towns where they are active are for the most part assumed, rarely attested – the *Pullaieni*, whose estate by *Thugga* is known from an inscription, are an exception. Italian senators reportedly owned half of Africa (until Nero confiscated their holdings), but they are not visible in any way, either as builders or as patrons.<sup>225</sup> The grander estates could encompass sizeable *vici*, but ownership does not seem to have fostered any relations to the people on the land, at least such as

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medium varies over time. No less than 15 texts recording construction associated with senators, all in the Northeast and for the most part connected to Carthage, date to Gallienus.

<sup>223</sup> The material from Carthage itself, poor as it is, suggests the same social horizon as builders, with *aediles* the highest magistrates represented. In the smaller towns, the status is often not articulated further than *decurion*, quite enough to trump the locals.

<sup>224</sup> Such as the *Vicus Annaeus* (*ILTun.* 778-9, *AE* 1957.57).

<sup>225</sup> Pliny the Elder, *NH* 18.35

became manifest in inscriptions, of which very few testify to construction on private estates, and none that involves the owner in the role of builder.<sup>226</sup> Epigraphy occasionally does offer a glimpse of the agrarian side of the African communities, but these texts do not derive from the ownership stratum. Most such snapshots are provided by officials rising through service in the *res privata*, a phenomenon, as mentioned above, particularly notable in the Western towns but also at towns such as *Thysdrus*, which appears to have been rather closely tied to the imperial administration, and not least to the management of imperial properties.<sup>227</sup> They rose from local elites, and their construction activities do not differ from those of local builders but fit into the general honorific framework of towns and families of which they were an integral part.

However, beyond these exists a group of building inscriptions from estates, and a small number found in towns but associated with estates. They feature farmers and estate managers as builders, at various levels in the rural hierarchy: *coloni*, *vilici*, the more well-to-do *possessores*

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<sup>226</sup> The formula *in his praediis* occurs in 11 texts from Africa Proconsularis, of which almost all are epitaphs of slaves or border stones. 3 refer to construction, one (the restoration of baths at Hammam Siala, *CIL* 8.14457) on an imperial property. The builder is unknown. The other 2 record unknown building projects, one at Sidi Amar on an estate of the *Memmi* in 225 (*CIL* 8.27551) by an unknown builder, the other at *Avita Bibba* (*AE* 1997.1640) by a slave named *Restitutus*. Another example from an imperial estate records a donation by a slave *vicarius* (*AE* 1960.121). For a table of instances, Lengrand 1996: 110-116. Two further items date to the 4th c, one (not very informative) from Carthage, the other a mosaic inscription from *Uthina* mentioning the *praedia* of a wealthy local family, the *Laberii*. Lengrand connects all owners attested with the highest elite stratum of the province (p. 125).

<sup>227</sup> E.g. the procuratorial organization which has been identified at a number of locations such as *Theveste*, *Hippo Regius*, *Leptiminus* and Carthage. An example is *T. Flavius Macer* mentioned above in n. 204. Another is *AE* 2003.1933 in which *Pheradi Maius* honors its citizen *Q. Agrius Rusticianus*, procurator of *Tractus Karthaginis*. Imperial freedmen and procurators are frequently attested, such as *L. Aurelius Ianuarius* who restored a temple at *Masclianae* (*AE* 2007.1712). A family that gets ahead through posts tied to imperial domains are the *Iulii Sabini* at *Madauros*, the latest dating to Aurelian, *T. Iulius Sabinus Victorianus*, a procurator of the patrimonium of *Regio Leptiminensis* who built a temple to Concord (*ILAlg.* 1.2035).

and *conductores*, as well as a few slaves.<sup>228</sup> Most of them are connected to imperial properties, while the farmers on private estates are rarely attested as engaging in any form of building epigraphy or honorifics. A typical example is this inscription from an unknown *fundus* which mentions the *plebs fundi*, likely to be interpreted as *coloni*:

[Pro salut]e Imperatorum Caesarum Aug(ustorum) M. Aurelli Antonini | [Ar]meniacy lib(erorum)que eius L. Aurelli Veri Armeniaci plebs fundi | [---]itani maceriam dom(inae) Cerer(is) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecit) idemq(ue) d(e)d(icavit) mag(istro) P. Statilio | Silvano <q>ui <e>t [---]ma.<sup>229</sup>

Another example is the imperial estate at *Saltus Massipiani* (Qasr al Hammam), where the *coloni* build under Marcus:

Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M. Aureli Antonini Aug(usti) li|berorumq(ue) eius coloni saltus Massipiani aedificia vetustate | conlapsa s(ua) p(ecunia) r(estituerunt) item arcus duos a s(olo) f(ecerunt) iubente Provin|ciale Aug(usti) lib(erto) proc(uratore) eodemque dedicante.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>228</sup> Examples: the *plebs fundi* build at *Fundus ...itanus* (CIL 8.23022); three imperial *vernae* built a nymphaeum at Djeradou on an imperial estate (CIL 8.27550); *coloni* built and dedicated statues at *Fundus Turris Rutundae* (ILTun. 1568), *Saltus Massipiani* (CIL 8.587; CIL 8.11731), and *Fundus Ver...* (CIL 8.11735-6), and at *Saltus Thibaritani* (CIL 8.26182); *vilici* built at M'heimes (CIL 8.12314) and *Thuburbo Maius* (IL Afr. 257); *possessores* were active at an unknown *fundus* (AE 1980.917) and at *Tappugabenses* (ILTun. 628); *conductores* dedicated statues at *Thugga* (IL Afr. 568) and *Hippo Regius* (IL Alg. 1.3992). Also, a *structor* raised two columns in a Caelestis sanctuary at *Vallis* (ILTun. 1281).

<sup>229</sup> CIL 8.23022: "For the health of the Emperors Caesars Augusti M. Aurelius Antoninus conqueror of Armenia and of his children, and L. Aurelius Verus conqueror of Armenia, the people of the estate of the .... raised the perimeter wall of the mistress Ceres from their own money and dedicated it, while P. Statilius Silvanus who is also called ... was *magister*."

<sup>230</sup> CIL 8.587: "For the health of the Emperors Caesars Augusti M. Aurelius Antoninus conqueror of Armenia and of his children, the farmers of the estate of the Massipiani restored the buildings that had collapsed from old age, and also raised two arches from the ground, on the order of *Provincialis*, imperial freedman and procurator, who also dedicated (them)."

The projects and their presentation are not much different from those of local notables or of towns (to be treated below). The farmers built out of their own money, and applied the same formulas as builders in *municipia* or *civitates*. As in these, temples dominate, to the same range of deities (Ceres, Neptune, Pluto, the *genius* goddess of the estate of *Masclianae*) and to the emperor, followed by arches as in the example above.<sup>231</sup> Another feature that resembles town practices is the frequent appearance of imperial statues, which were a point of pride for the towns in the same manner as imperial priesthoods, and were often raised for office.<sup>232</sup> What is remarkable about these inscriptions is not their formulas or content, but their locations and builders – not towns and magistrates, but estates and farmers. Dennis Kehoe has described these estates as resembling formally recognized towns in aspect, and some do seem to have had a rather full set of public structures.<sup>233</sup> This should warn against interpreting silence in terms of building inscriptions as absence of actual construction – estate *vici* could evidently boast a fair degree of monumentality, without necessarily generating the epigraphy to show for it. These rural communities become visible to us only when they strive for formal recognition as towns, building and behaving as if they already were. Some feature *magistri* in ways that mimic town councils. The social spectrum that they display is, as Kehoe pointed out, not that low: in fact, those visible are fairly well-to-do. For instance, the *coloni* who dedicate an unknown item to Septimius Severus at *Fundus Ver...* were all Roman citizens before 212. It is feasible that they harbored municipal ambitions, enhancing their *vici* with the intention to petition for town status.

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<sup>231</sup> Ceres, see above; to Neptune at *Fundus Ver...*, *CIL* 08, 11735; Pluto, *Fundus Iubaltianensis CIL* 8.11217.

<sup>232</sup> See chapter III on imperial statues as *munera*.

<sup>233</sup> Kehoe 1988; also Kehoe 2006, Carlsen 1994, Demsiri-Laadoua 1995. Examples are *Fundus Ver...* where a nymphaeum was raised, *Saltus Massipiani* and *Fundus Turris Rutundae*.

The rarity of private estates compared to imperial in the record of building inscriptions is remarkable, and I believe not coincidental; the development of estate *vici* toward townships may well have been less felt on private than on imperial properties. The only exceptions in my sample do not represent construction, but statues, one to Severus Alexander raised in the vicinity of *Theveste* by the *Vesatenses*, native slaves on an estate owned by the senator *C. Annius Anullinus Geminus Percennianus* for whose health and prosperity the statue is dedicated, and another to a private man raised by the *vicani* of *Vicus Annaeus*, also as it seems slaves but behaving in ways that resemble a proper town.<sup>234</sup> Imperial estates do not seem to have been staffed by slave labor but through a system of sharecropping by free *coloni* that allowed for substantial independence on their part, made amply manifest in the proto-municipal behavior that the building inscriptions represent.<sup>235</sup> Not many such texts survive, but they have received a fair share of attention, and the observer could easily assume them to be more plentiful than they actually are. Most estates were likely less stately, and perhaps were not all manned in this way. The misconception is, in a sense, a corrective: the social stratum that the texts represent constituted a far larger share of African society than their low visibility in epigraphy suggests. The few glimpses offered through these inscriptions warn against identifying the epigraphic building record with actual settlement

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<sup>234</sup> *Vesatenses*: *ILAlg.* 1.3636. For the owner, *PLRE/PIR* 2. His slave *Maximus* also dedicated in the vicinity (*CIL* 8.27943). For *Vicus Annaeus*, see above n. 223. The *vicani* there dedicated two statues to a patron.

<sup>235</sup> The so-called Mancian agreements, according to which *coloni* had hereditary rights to plots at fixed rents on terms that appear favorable, including incentives to cultivate marginal land. Their content is known from a series of inscriptions that quote rulings by Trajan and Hadrian, found in the Medjerda valley and dating to the reign of Commodus. A new fragment has recently been retrieved in the Dougga survey, de Vos ed. 2000: 34-35. The system is often assumed to have been in use on private estates as well, but there is little evidence for it (and such as there is, i.e. the Albertini Tablets, is too late to be relevant as the area no longer belonged to the empire). Extensively on the *lex Manciana*, *lex Hadriana* and sharecropping, Kehoe 1988, 2006 and 2007.



patterns. For instance, the area around *Theveste* where the *Vesatenses* were active is entirely devoid of towns, but nonetheless dotted with findspots for imperial statues, indicating that a dispersed pattern of estate villages existed which must thus have had some manner of public spaces. Many of the recognized townships were little more than glorified villages, and for all their pomp they were agrarian communities, too.

As for fluctuations over time, estate building inscriptions are too few to allow for much generalization. Some date to Marcus, two to Septimius Severus and/or Caracalla. The dedication by the *Vesatenses* dates to Severus Alexander, the item from *Fundus Turris Rutundae* to Maximinus Thrax, followed by a hiatus until Diocletian. They are spread more evenly over the area than other builders, appearing in all three subregions, and particularly in the South.

### *Towns and collectives*

Most inscriptions from estates and their *vici* differ from the texts treated in the previous two sections in that they relate projects undertaken as collectives, not as private individuals. Their closest comparisons in the municipal sphere are not the magistrates but the towns as such, which begin appearing on the epigraphic scene from Domitian onward, and become steadily more numerous as the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. progresses. They remain visible until the early 4<sup>th</sup> c., and constitute by far the largest group within my sample after the *flamines*, responsible for about 30% of the texts in which a builder is known. The earliest examples of collective construction tend to list the names of all contributors, and make for rather long-winded texts, such as the inscription regarding a

basilica usually called the “*schola iuvenum*” of *Mactaris*, a list of 65 individuals.<sup>236</sup> If this project in an old regional metropolis appears rather grand, others are less imposing. For instance, the social distance between the *seniores* of the peregrine farming town *Tituli* and the *plebs fundi* of the estate inscription quoted above was likely not overwhelming.<sup>237</sup> The same might be said for the Roman citizens who built *paganica* in two outlying *pagi* of the territory of *Sicca Veneria*.<sup>238</sup> Most frequently, the texts describe the community that builds as a *respublica* or *ordo*, or *pagus* and/or *civitas* for dependent communities, followed by a genitive of the townsfolk. These formulas are increasingly replaced by the simple collective, e.g. *Thuggenses*, especially after the franchise of 212. While many towns retain their old titles (even when no longer meaningful) they are not consistently employed, resulting in much imprecision. *Lepcis Magna*, a colony since Trajan, could style itself a mere *municipium* at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., even though poised to

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<sup>236</sup> *AE* 1959.172, a treasure trove of native names. A trickle of such collectives of Punic and Romanizing names appear, most not dated, e.g. *AE* 1963.124 from *Sucubi*: *In templum Pluton|is factum | porticum | fecerunt | Misre Felicis | Imilis Iamon|is f(i)lius Annoi Zaz|ci et Zrubalis | Anonis f(i)lius sufetes | Sucube(n)sium fece|runt Felix Iamo | Bolmicar Ioli Sur|us Zuresius Feli2cio | Diomede Baliato | Anterotis Fortu|natus Diomedis | Assan Cilo Abdili|m Caledius Rusticu|s Ioli Namcido Cad|aius Ibubalis An|imus Felix Aesopi | Cadaius sua Eu|primigenius se|cundaes fece|runt queis Fortu|natus ad ulinis | Caledii Mutumb|al Nassaius Mis|cadaius Banocilo | suis impe(n)sis cum | colum{i}nis trib|us constituerunt*. Those that can be dated tend to be Flavian, as in the *Mactaris* example. One that may potentially be later is *BCTH* 1925.287 at *Madauros*, which lists contributors to a basilica. They were predominantly Roman citizens, among them a *P. Apuleius Felix*, who is assumed to be an ancestor of the author. The town was a Flavian veteran colony, and a late 1<sup>st</sup> c. date remains possible.

<sup>237</sup> A nymphaeum by the *seniores*: *CIL* 27828: *Neptuno Aug(usto) sacr(um) | seniores et plebs Titulitan(orum) | aere conlato fontem c[um omni?] | opere a solo [fec]eru[nt] et dedi|[caveru]nt TV[---]C[.]F FEI[---] mag(istro?) [pa]g(i?)*.

<sup>238</sup> *Aubuzza* (Djezza, *CIL* 8.16368) dating to Pius, and *Ain Char* (*CIL* 8.23326), undated. The term *paganicum* is not well understood, but in the case of *Aubuzza* it included bath installments, and I have tentatively categorized them as “entertainment.”

become a province capital.<sup>239</sup> Town titlature was often omitted; several civic items are identified simply by *pp* for *pecunia publica*, while others that leave out any hint of the builder (usually to make way for more grandiose imperial titles) are likely raised by the city as well.<sup>240</sup>

It should be noted that free and dependent towns both engage in the practice. It is often stated that elevation to formal municipal status is what sparked construction, but the role of emancipation is to my mind overstated. There was much construction activity in dependent *pagi* or *civitates*, and in several of the towns more so than post emancipation, a phenomenon that seems to go beyond the fact that all epigraphy wanes after Caracalla.<sup>241</sup> Construction in as yet dependent towns tends to be explained as anticipation of elevation to come, a brief transitional phase. These “towns-to-be” jumped the gun and started building.<sup>242</sup> However, in the case of *Thugga* (as in many others) this began at least 70 years before emancipation, a long time to uphold anticipation. Nor does the archaeology of the towns support viewing the emancipation date as decisive for construction, according to Gerda Kleinwächter who has examined forum areas in a group of African towns. She argues strongly for a dissolution of the emancipation – construction nexus, and claims that the fora were built before there were any signs of either

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<sup>239</sup> *IRT* 544, a dedication to a Diocletianic official *ex decreto ordinis municipi*. On lingering titlature, see esp. Kotula 1974. Lepelley 2001: 92, following Kotula, calls it a matter of conservatism and imitation of Rome.

<sup>240</sup> So Saastamoinen, 2008a: 36-8 who refers all inscriptions that do not mention a builder to this category. This is particularly common for inscriptions that have the appearance and arrangement that are associated with arches. He also refers items presented as by private persons to the civic category if funding is not mentioned, seeing the act as no more than supervision (p. 128).

<sup>241</sup> To name but a few towns with more building inscriptions while dependent: *Agbia*, *Apisa Minus*, *Aradi*, *Belalis Maior*, *Biracsaccar*, *Gales*, *Giufi*, *Sululos*, *Thugga*, *Uchi Maius*, *Uzali Sar*.

<sup>242</sup> See esp. Gasco 1972: 160 who suggested that *Thugga* (where far more construction took place before than after emancipation, going by epigraphic evidence) had a preparatory municipal status under Marcus. He proposed a similar situation for *Numluli* and others, calling them “*municipia* to be.”

proper or “preparatory” municipal status, blaming an excessive focus on epigraphy for the misconception.<sup>243</sup> But even in epigraphy the tie that exists between inscribing and emancipation is misunderstood – the situation seems actually to be the reverse of what is argued, with a lower tendency to inscribe (if not also raise) buildings after than before.

What does seem to be affected by emancipation is private construction by local notables; in fact it largely disappears.<sup>244</sup> This is not only relevant for the moment of elevation, when a slew of celebratory items tend to be raised by the town councils, but henceforth. In the most prolific of all towns, *Thugga*, 90% of the pre-elevation items (28) were raised by private individuals, to be compared to 44% of those after (16), and until Gallienus all such works were “residual,” that is, the completion of projects begun or willed before emancipation. *Thignica* shows the same trajectory, with only civic construction post emancipation until Gallienus, and there are several similar examples.<sup>245</sup> Another common misconception concerns the reasons for towns to emerge as builders during the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., often involving arguments that hinge on utility and need. The city councils – more practical in their construction activities than the benefactors – had to step in to secure the functionality of the towns, providing vital infrastructure and amenities.<sup>246</sup> As seen above, private individuals (as far as epigraphy tells us) were not as a rule engaged in this manner of construction. However, judging by their building inscriptions, neither were the town councils.

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<sup>243</sup> Kleinwächter 2001: 12-18. She shows that many attributions, particularly to Septimius Severus, have no basis in archaeology but were dictated by epigraphy, and by the idea that this period represents the peak of prosperity for African towns.

<sup>244</sup> A comparison may be made to the observations of Elizabeth A. Wueste 2012, who notes that at Aphrodisias, non-citizen locals were far more prone to feature in statuary than citizens – it seems they disappeared from view once they obtained the franchise.

<sup>245</sup> E.g. *Limisa* and *Avedda*, which have no further private construction activity at all.

<sup>246</sup> So Leone 2007: 34. Also Jouffroy 1986: 208, who both claim that the cities built what was needed to sustain them. Saastamoinen 2008a: 47 claims baths, walls and aqueducts were the first items that towns built as collectives.

They relate exactly the same types of objects as those built by the *flamines*, predominantly temples and arches, and in no way fill the gaps left by local elites as private individuals. The public works category is slim – apart from the likely very early basilica at *Madauros* mentioned above there are only three items, none of which bears the mark of emergency: a curia at *Gales* dedicated with much pomp during the reign of Maximinus Thrax, the restoration of the forum portico at *Uchi Maius*, also a rather ceremonial event, and a more humble nymphaeum.<sup>247</sup>

Entertainment structures are fewer still; there are no instances at all except the Gallienic baths at *Thubursicu Bure*, a very high profile project dedicated by the proconsul, and a restoration of the southern baths at *Hippo Regius*.<sup>248</sup> Beyond this there is one unique infrastructural investment, an aqueduct built in collaboration with the emperor Commodus.<sup>249</sup> This should be compared to at least 60 temples and 20 arches. Building as a town does not thus seem to have involved rescue operations, or aimed at utility, any more than building as an individual. The similarity between civic and private local construction should perhaps not surprise us – in essence they represent the same social stratum, concerned with broadcasting the same manner of projects.

Urban upkeep may well have been handled by the councils as a matter of routine, through liturgies devolving onto the lower decurions, but if so, these works were executed without any public commemoration, at least in durable materials. How the towns actually sustained their public architecture, besides temples, is thus not much known through epigraphy at all, either before or after the “boom” years of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> c. (to which period none of the items that mention aediles date). What is broadcast through epigraphy tend to be objects of pride, for the cities as

<sup>247</sup> *Gales*: CIL 8.757; *Uchi Maius*: CIL 8.15449; nymphaeum at *Mactaris*: CIL 8.23402.

<sup>248</sup> *Thubursicu Bure*: ILAfr. 506; *Hippo Regius*: AE 1958.141. Saastamoinen 2008a: 48 claims that towns regularly built baths, but this is not evident in the material from the area here treated.

<sup>249</sup> CIL 8.1480.

much as for their magistrates. In fact, it appears that the collective represented a particularly solemn mode of dedication, used for monumental structures such as Capitolia or imperial arches, a tendency that continued long after emancipation. At times the proconsul was himself present as dedicator. Texts commemorating civic construction generally include fewer specific elements than those of private builders, with little space accorded either to object, cost, or builder; yet they are among the longest in the sample as they sport the most long-winded imperial titles available, lending them a high-blown, ceremonial air.

### *Aims and audiences*

When explaining construction by locals, emotions usually take center stage: patriotism, a desire for prestige, for a lasting memory as a good citizen caring for the commonweal.<sup>250</sup> Statue bases often celebrate the donations of benefactors as acts of devotion, as *amor*, a sentiment that is assumed to be at play when building also.<sup>251</sup> Even those who emphasize the other side of the coin of philanthropy, seeing it primarily as a vehicle for the rich to remain in power, usually assume that their efforts met vital needs of the community, which thus profited from the exchange.<sup>252</sup> However, the limited range of construction in the African towns that was broadcast through inscriptions catered not so much to the needs of the community as to those of their uppermost elite, in a position to entertain ambitions beyond the towns themselves. No utility informed the

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<sup>250</sup> Gascou 1972: 63 calls them acts of patriotism, and peaceful competition, although he admits that there may have been a return in terms of establishing the power of the family. Wesch-Klein 1990: 41 also puts honor and emotions first, a wish to leave behind a lasting legacy and memory of oneself as doer of “good deeds.”

<sup>251</sup> E.g. *CIL* 8.26622 (*Thugga*): *..[ob exi]mium amorem | [in ci]ves et in patriam.. CIL* 8.5276a-b (*Hippo Regius*): *..in patriam suam in|comparabilem amo|rem...*

<sup>252</sup> E.g., Saastamoinen 2008a: 9.

endless additions to the Caelestis precinct at *Thugga*, and arches are profoundly useless.<sup>253</sup> The motivation for the choices of object is at times spelled out: *ad patriam suam exornandam*, to adorn the *patria*.<sup>254</sup> According to the rhetorical handbook of Menander, the splendor of the *origo* was a key element in panegyrics to prominent officials, articulated in a list of the temples and monuments that the town should ideally boast.<sup>255</sup> To embellish the *origo* with structures such as these was to raise the profile of the town, which served the interests of a certain social stratum. *Patria* should not be understood as “the people” – in some cases it even referred to Carthage.<sup>256</sup> It is probably more to the point to take it as “the people who matter,” i.e., one’s own class.<sup>257</sup> The inscriptions rarely frame the projects as undertaken for the good of all or describe the projects as benefactions.<sup>258</sup> One might expect words such as *dono* to be frequent, but there are only two instances in the entire sample, one the inscription of *Pullaienus*, who by no means belongs to the category of local builders.<sup>259</sup>

A further hint as to who the intended audiences were can be found in the ending formulas of many inscriptions, which describe munificence associated with the dedication ceremonies. These “party favors” in the shape of *sportulae* and banquets were for the most part only extended

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<sup>253</sup> See above n. 168.

<sup>254</sup> *CIL* 8.15497, *Aptucca* (Hr Oudeka). Similar expression appear on statue bases; *ornator* or *ornatrix patriae* are common at Lepcis Magna. Wesch-Klein 1990: 46.

<sup>255</sup> Menander Rhetor *Epibaterios* 386.22-29, also 377.31-388.15. Cf. Pausanias 10.4.1 on the sorry state of Panopeus, barely a polis seeing its lack of monumental architecture.

<sup>256</sup> See above pp. 88. Paul Scheding 2011 argues that *pertica* towns were little more than backdrops for the ambitions of Carthaginians who resided in the metropolis.

<sup>257</sup> A distinction is sometimes spelled out between *cives* and *patria* (e.g. *AE* 1992.1800, *Abbir Maius*) showing that the latter was not perceived as equal to the community as such.

<sup>258</sup> The few exceptions (less than 5) invariably come from fringe locations. One is the peregrine town *Chusira* in Byzacena (*CIL* 8.703, *CIL* 8.12126) where the formula *propter commodum populi* appears twice, as it seems a local convention.

<sup>259</sup> An undated temple at *Sua*: *CIL* 8.1309; for *Pullaienus*, see above p. 93.

to fellow decurions: if “the people” are mentioned, they receive significantly less. Wesch-Klein scoured the whole North African record for gifts that were distributed more widely, and came up with a depressingly small sample.<sup>260</sup> One might perhaps argue further that the setting up of an inscription was by default not directed at the wider public, since the wider public could not read. Rather than motivated by care for the wellbeing of the community, the main aim of their effort is outward and upward: to enhance the value of the town as springboard to higher positions. Ambition is usually mentioned only as a second consideration when locals build, and then as a bid for personal glory rather than more tangible returns. However, in most cases the aim was quite concrete, and explicit: positions for self and family members. The projects served directly to promote the family, indirectly the town with which the family would always be associated.

The role of local benefactors in sustaining their communities has been reexamined by Arjan Zuiderhoek, who threw down the gauntlet by suggesting that the contribution of elite euergetism to the overall standard of living for the inhabitants of the towns of Asia Minor was small, and that elite strata may have hindered than helped the functionality of their towns.<sup>261</sup> His study is provocative, and one may perhaps question the numbers that he produces, but he does succeed in putting into question that elite munificence was the lifeblood of the ancient towns. His findings are in many ways corroborated by the behavior of the *flamines* in my material; in the choice of ornament over utility, in the relatively modest size of most contributions, and also in the lack of concern for the *plebs*. The study by Graham Burton on the relation between the state and local communities records a long row of examples from Augustus onward where imperial

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<sup>260</sup> Wesch-Klein 1990: 34-6. Less than 10 from the all African provinces, most of them not by the locals but by higher status individuals.

<sup>261</sup> Zuiderhoek 2009.



authorities struggled with local elites who encroached on public finances, through unfulfilled promises or debts unpaid, revealing that “civic spirit” was perhaps less relevant for their behavior than is usually assumed.<sup>262</sup> Gilles Bransbourg paints a similar picture of a struggle over the control over public resources between the cities and their own elites, an easy win for the latter since they made up the governing body of the former. He, too, describes repeated attempts by imperial authorities to hinder local elites from abusing their towns, suggesting they were not overly invested in their well-being, at least not in financial terms.<sup>263</sup>

As a result of poor city finances, it is argued, the towns were forced to rely on euergetism, although the building inscriptions do not much testify to this. Zuiderhoek, following Schwartz, suggested that the towns were able to sustain their functionality through taxes, not benefactions, but in this regard I would not necessarily agree. The contributions of benefactors may well have funded utilitarian projects and general upkeep, as the rare glimpses of the building activities of aediles rather suggest.<sup>264</sup> It needs to be repeated that the epigraphic record reveals only certain processes, and that we do not know how the architectural frame against which to see the projects broadcast through epigraphy came into being or was maintained. The slim but important sample of higher status builders warns both against taking the epigraphic record too literally, and against

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<sup>262</sup> Burton 2004: 318-9, 332-5. His study encompasses all provinces. Examples where the governor had to force locals to fulfill their promises to build are recorded at *Thamugadi* and *Cuicul* under Hadrian (*CIL* 8.20144, *AE* 1964.225).

<sup>263</sup> Bransbourg 1995: 255, 262-9. The development was viewed with alarm by central authorities. Oshimizu 2012.

<sup>264</sup> See above p. 70, esp. n. 158. The statue base to the aedile who added to the amphitheatre at *Thuburnica* is ripe with euergetic flair. *AE* 1988.1116: *C(aio) Sallustio C(ai) fil(io) | Quir(ina) Felici aedili | quod primus in col(onia) | sua amphitheatrum | suis sumptibus excolue|rit et quod insign(i) lusi|onis edition(e) patriae | suae voluptates ampli|averit addita etiam | singulari ac benigna | erga universos cives | libertate curiales | [l]abori grata obsequi|[a] et ut remuneraren(tur) | et ut facti eius gloria | etiam ad posteros perse|veraret de suo posuer(unt) | cur(ante) M(arco) Petronio Felice | d(e)d(icaveruntque) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).*

discarding euergetism – the most significant projects lie for the most part outside the medium. For that very reason, the ultimate aims of projects of the *clarissimi* who operated on a regional scale are harder to make out. That these went beyond being remembered fondly by the locals seems reasonable. That their activities had a greater significance is indicated by a law quoted during the reign of Alexander Severus against erecting circuses, theatres and amphitheatres without the express permission of the emperor. Two reasons have been offered for the ruling: either that the popular appeal of these edifices made central authorities view their construction by private individuals with unease, or, that there was fear lest the towns overextend themselves with such costly undertakings. Seeing that the evidence for their construction, although admittedly scant, points to private benefactors, the first explanation seems the more likely, and in fact the law explicitly concerns private persons, contrasted with another that deals with the construction of towns.<sup>265</sup> In terms of audience, the projects aimed as widely as possible, which may in part explain the absence of inscriptions, the financiers opting instead to have their role communicated through images. If it is open to question whether *ob honorem* construction should really be labeled euergetism, these projects certainly qualify, and as such, were viewed with suspicion.

The aims of the farming communities engaging in public construction, and publishing it by inscriptions, are never spelled out. In some cases the projects were commanded by its managers, as at *Saltus Massipiani*; in others the collective of the *coloni* pose as initiators. The process reflects, I believe, aspiration: on the part of a procurator to promote himself, on that of the *coloni* to elevate their *vici* to formally recognized townships. As well nigh all examples derive from imperial estates, they were part of an organization with its own bureaucracy, and it is through the

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<sup>265</sup> *Dig.* 50.10.3. For overextension, Gil 2010. Concerning civic construction, for which all manner of projects are stated to require imperial authorization, *Dig.* 50.10.3.1.

ranks of the *res privata* that the community might have hoped to reach the ears of the emperor, and their goal of independence. Their activity may be described as a mirror of that of local notables in the towns, but with imperial officials the audience, not the Carthaginian nobility.

### *Changes and conventions*

As neither their activity nor that of the high status benefactors conforms well to the canonical curve of a peak under Septimius Severus followed by a 3<sup>rd</sup> c. low, the real change featured in the “drop” concerns the publication of construction by local notables, and to explain it one must consider the circumstances affecting them in particular. Although city councils continue their branch of construction to some extent, the pace is lower, and only the most pompous projects continued to be inscribed. The development is not gradual, but drastic and sudden – in a stroke, it goes from its highest record to its lowest. The change is most strongly felt in the periphery, where building epigraphy disappears almost entirely: the 68 years from Caracalla to Diocletian have yielded only 4 instances. The Northeast continues to produce a decent rate, well above that of the 1<sup>st</sup> c., but a trickle compared to the soaring levels of the Antonines or Caracalla.

Among explanations, the “3<sup>rd</sup> c. crisis” has figured prominently, favored, at least initially, by Lepelley. He blamed it on Gordian III’s general Capellianus, whose defeat of the revolt of the *legio III Augusta* disrupted the noble families in the region.<sup>266</sup> Duncan-Jones is one of the staunchest defenders of a “crisis” explanation, suggesting among other reasons heavy taxation, and that intermittent *damnatio memoriae* cautioned against construction even in prosperous

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<sup>266</sup> Lepelley 1979: 83: “Le meilleur témoignage sur la crise des villes durant ces cinquante années est le silence des inscriptions...” He argues that the defeat of the rebelling legion led to aristocratic heads falling, drastically reducing the abilities of the locals to perform benefactions.

regions.<sup>267</sup> Although I am no denier of the “crisis” and believe it likely that it may have had an effect on construction, the chronology is not a good fit, at least not as usually described. The drop hits far earlier than Gordian III, a fact that is often obscured by combining all Severans. Unless we see the second decade of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. as the point when the crisis begins, the two are not directly related. The suddenness of the drop also warns against seeing more long term developments at the root of the phenomenon. Crisis arguments, furthermore, have a tendency to become circular, as in the case of formulas referring to restorations. The phrase *vetustate collapsum* and variants thereof are at times treated as signs of crisis, but they appear already under Augustus and were entirely routine – they should not be taken as cries of despair in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. any more than in the 2<sup>nd</sup>., when they are not uncommon.<sup>268</sup> Restoration had a rhetorical value, invoking ideas of renewal and a golden age. Emperors from Augustus onward exploited it – in fact, after the Julio-Claudians nearly all building projects in the Western provinces by an emperor are restorations.<sup>269</sup> Besides, *ex novo* items are not to be trusted outright; for instance, Dio Cassius describes Septimius Severus as claiming to have raised buildings afresh that he had

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<sup>267</sup> Duncan-Jones 2004: 36.

<sup>268</sup> E.g. *Sustri* (Ben Ergueia, *ILAfr.* 495) under Marcus, restoration by the *civitas* of a Pluto shrine that was destroyed by old age, *vetustate corruptum*. Restorations become more common with time and make up 27% of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. inscriptions (Saastamoinen 2008a: 417). The first such attested in Africa comes from *Vaga* (Béja) and dates to 2 BCE (*CIL* 8.14392). Witschel & Thomas 1992:143-148 describe *vetustate* formulas as conventional, meant to enhance the present project rather than describe the actual situation. An example from early 2<sup>nd</sup> c. *Thugga* records the restoration of the Saturn temple by the *civitas*. Such collective projects usually concern the more prominent, monumental structures, and this is no exception; the Saturn sanctuary was the pride of the town. *ILAfr.* 551: *Saturno Aug(usto) sac(rum) / civitas Thuggensis templum vetustate consumptum / sua pecunia restituit id[e]mq[ue] dedicavit*.

<sup>269</sup> Horster 2001: 19, 50. She accepts these restorations as substantial and treats them on a par with other construction. A project raised *ex novo*, but presented as reconstructed, is the Neronian baths at Rome, rebuilt from scratch by Severus Alexander with not a single Neronian brick in it. On an imperial rhetoric of restoration, Witschel & Thomas 1992:141 ff.

only restored, and Ammianus blames Trajan for the same behavior, calling him a “wall-wort.”<sup>270</sup>

In my region, restorers are for the most part private individuals, but the sense is the same, as is the prestige attached.<sup>271</sup> The restoration of a temple “destroyed by old age” at *Uchi Maius* is clearly an exaggeration, since the shrine was erected by the builder’s own father.<sup>272</sup>

Seeing how large a share of the construction in African towns was never inscribed, it seems clear that only such projects that were points of pride ever were. This restoration inscription from *Agbia* (dating to Antoninus Pius, before emancipation) betrays no sense of emergency; rather it is unusually grand, including an unusual excess of patriotic phrases and extending party favors also to the population at large:

*Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Antonini Aug(usti) Pii | liberorumq(ue) eius | [L.] Cincius C. f. Arn(ensi) Victor cum ad tuendam | rem public(am) suam ex consensu decurio|num omnium iampridem patronus | factus esset porticum templi Cererum ve|tustate consumptam a solo restituit et | statuam genii curiae ex HS IIII m(ilibus) n(ummum) in curia po|suit et die dedicationis decurionib(us) sportulas | asses octonos et universis civibus epulum | dedit cumq(ue) propter eiusdem Cinci Victoris | merita quae circa r(em) p(ublicam) suam et universos | cives exhibuisset M. Cincium Felicem Iulianum | fil. eius ex consensu et favore*

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<sup>270</sup> Trajan the “wall-wort,” Amm. Marc. *Hist.* 27.3.5. Dio Cassius *Rom. hist.* 77.16.3 on Severus usurping the works of others. Horster 2001: 28-9 confirms this for both emperors. Daguet-Gagey 1997: 162, although laboring to frame Severus as a very prolific builder, agrees that he overstated his involvement with the Pantheon, omitting mention of the original builder. He only made minor additions, as pointed out by Thomas & Witschel 1992: 135, who puts the misrepresentation down to Severus’ “liberal relation to epigraphic truth.”

<sup>271</sup> As shown by 4th c. builders who exaggerate the dilapidation to make their own works appear more grand, e.g. *ILAlg.* 1.2108 (*Madauros*): *Excellens glo[ria ddd(ominorum) nnn(ostorum) invic]|tissimorum prin[cipum Arcadi H]onor[i et Theodosi] | semper Auggg(ustorum) adm[ini]strante P]omp(eio) Proc[ulo] | v(iro) c(larissimo) procons(u)le p(rovinciae) A(fricae) leg[ato Num(idiae)] Q. Thersio Cr[ispino] | Megetio v(iro) c(larissimo) Cl(audius) S[isen]na Germanianu[s] | curator rei p(ublicae) cel[la]m balnearum lon[ga] | serie temporum ruina desolatam usib[usque] | lavacrorum den[e]gatam sumptu prop[rio et] | cam{o}eram cum suspensuris constructam novi[s] | ab splendido ordin[e] decretis titulis ded[icavit].*

<sup>272</sup> *CIL* 8.26400, dated by Saastamoinen to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. Lengrand 1996: 122 suggested that the initial structure was built of wood or some other perishable material.

*patronum expostu|lassent et fecissent Cincius Victor pater eius ad am|pliandam  
benignitatem suam statuam Fortunae | cum ex IS V m(ilibus nummum) promississet  
ampliata pec(unia) d(e) s(uo) p(osuit) ide[mq(ue)] | dedic(avit) et ea die decurionib(us)  
pagi et civitat(is) sportulas | a(sses) VIII et universis civibus [ep]ulum ded[it].*<sup>273</sup>

Emotional interpretations of late antique inscriptions informed by ideas of “crisis” are not uncommon. An example is a basilica that a 4th c. senator raised at *Cuicul* (Djemila) instead of promised games, which Saastamoinen compares to an inscription dating to Septimius Severus, posted by a *flamen* who also replaced shows with construction.<sup>274</sup> The earlier instance includes a *cursus*, and thus, according to the author, bears witness to “enthusiastic self-aggrandizing,” while the latter, which does not, is “laconic, almost resigned.” Aside from remarking that no inscription would have been posted from a general fatigue of it all, the two are not comparable: as we have seen, senators never flaunted such details in their inscriptions. In fact, they rarely inscribed their objects at all; to do so was the practice of the smaller fry, the local officeholders. It may be noted

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<sup>273</sup> *CIL* 8.1548: “For the health of the Emperor Antoninus Augustus Pius and his children, L. Cincius Victor, son of Gaius, of the tribe Arnensi, already when by the consensus of all the decurions he was appointed patron, in order that he may look after his *respublica*, restored the portico of the temple of Ceres which was consumed with old age, and raised a statue in the curia of the genius of the curia for 4,000 sesterces, and on the day of dedication gave a gift of eight *as* to the decurions and a banquet to all the citizens. And when, due to the generosity that the said Cincius Victor had shown toward the *respublica* and all citizens, they unanimously and with devotion appointed his son M. Cincius Felix as patron, his father Cincius Victor, to augment his munificence, raised a statue to Fortuna that he had promised for 5,000 sesterces for more money out of his own funds and dedicated it, and on the day of dedication he gave gifts of 8 *as* to the decurions of the *pagus* and the *civitas*, and a banquet to all the citizens.”

<sup>274</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 131, *Cuicul*: *CIL* 8.20156. The activities of *Rutilius Saturninus* are described in archaizing terms as *faciendum curavit*, a phrase not used since the 1st c. The project was rather grand, dedicated by the governor of Numidia, and he also cooperated with another governor in building a further basilica, as it seems a joint project (*CIL* 8.8324). This late inscription is interpreted as evidence of pressure on local magistrates, the earlier (*Lepcis Magna*, *IRT* 396) as evidence of their freedom, but the only local magistrate in evidence is the Severan builder, and he had explicitly been obliged to obtain permission for the change by the emperor Commodus himself – if pressure there was, it is not the 4th c. inscription that testifies to it.

that the earlier project by the *flamen* is a restoration, perhaps answering the call of a law which encouraged the redirection of funds aimed at new projects to restorations. It is often quoted in discussions of the 3rd c. crisis, but in fact dates to Antoninus Pius.<sup>275</sup>

The idea that the diminished rate of building inscriptions was caused by the “3<sup>rd</sup> c. crisis” was questioned by Hélène Jouffroy, who instead of seeing them as an indication of the level of prosperity suggested that the need for public construction in the towns was saturated after the Severan boom years. This boom was followed by a “natural” low, and later, a regained, more reasonable pace.<sup>276</sup> As reasonable as the saturation model appears, it assumes that what was built was what needed to be built, and only that, which the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. record shows quite clearly was not the case. If epigraphy is taken as a guide, only temples and a few arches were built under Septimius Severus and his sons, and saturation did not deter anyone from erecting more of them. Lately, “saturation” has been reinterpreted as “hotbed,” as by Christophe Hugoniot who argues that intense construction activity at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. led to exhaustion. There are indeed signs of overreaching; one is the more frequent promises of structures that are less seldom realized in the lifetimes of the builders, suggesting that the competition had spiraled out of control.<sup>277</sup> Trouble on the horizon more generally can be gathered from grain distributions, of which all that have been attested date to the late 2<sup>nd</sup> and early 3rd c.<sup>278</sup> However, this type of information

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<sup>275</sup> Dig. 50.10.7, Callistratus, quoting *divus* Pius.

<sup>276</sup> Jouffroy 1986: 281-2. Absence of new construction after a boom, she argues, is not necessarily a sign of poverty.

<sup>277</sup> Hugoniot 2006: 398 on the “fringale,” the gaping hunger of the fledgling municipalities which lead them to compete through fresh construction that they did not benefit from and could not afford.

<sup>278</sup> Wesch-Klein 1990: 32-33. E.g. *ILAlg.* 1.2145 from *Madauros*, where *M. Cornelius Fronto Gabinianus*, a relative of the theatre builder, distributed grain during a famine. He is usually dated to Septimius Severus. To her list I would add an example (*AE* 1997.1651) from *Thugga*

generally comes from statue bases, which later ceased to include such data; likely this was a recurrent need throughout antiquity.

The decrease in construction was welcome, claims Witschel, who describes the civic apparatus that produced the high frequencies as bloated and useless. His main explanation for the drop is a change of mentalité, a combination of fear of worsening conditions and a switch to other forms of ostentation.<sup>279</sup> Lepelley has also argued for a change in attitude, a diminishing “civic spirit,” which lead to fewer benefactions.<sup>280</sup> Active involvement by emperors has also been suggested to discourage the locals from building. The introduction of *curatores rei publicae* in Africa by Septimius Severus, imperial officials charged with the task of putting city finances in order, may have put a damper on public spending. This would not only have affected civic but also *ob honorem* construction, which transferred civic funds into temple construction. If the “hotbed” interpretation is correct, this may well have been the main purpose of the new officials – if left to their own devices the towns would have drowned in temples. This explanation has the merit of dealing with the type of construction that actually made up the bulk of the record during the boom years. To this I would add the issue of municipalization, which severed many towns in the Northeast from Carthage. I believe it quite likely that the dissolution of the *pertica* made public construction in its former *pagi* less meaningful, seeing that the aim of many builders was to join the *ordo* of Carthage. If *pertica* towns were no longer relevant as springboards for careers in the metropolis, perhaps they were no longer relevant, period. Christophe Hugoniot observes that the *ordo* of Carthage became increasingly closed to newcomers during the 3rd c., turning

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when still a *civitas* (i.e. before 206). One may also note that the African finewares that circulated internationally during the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. disappear at the same time; see chapter V.1.

<sup>279</sup> Witschel 2004: 257, 264, 268.

<sup>280</sup> Lepelley 1997: 336.



into an ever more wealthy, influential, and exclusive group.<sup>281</sup> The policy of offering the franchise to *pertica* towns is for the most part described as an attempt to limit the growing prominence of these Carthaginian elites; every one of the Severan “town creations” concerned already *de facto* cities in the Northeast.<sup>282</sup> Gascou has argued for strong intentionality on the part of certain emperors in the promotion of towns, a measure that met with no applause in the metropolis against which it was aimed.<sup>283</sup> If so, the policy seems to have failed – what was expected to empower the small towns likely had the opposite consequence.<sup>284</sup> The Carthaginian senators, by contrast, only grew more powerful.

If the “boom” record was to a large extent fuelled by a particular dynamic created by the megacity Carthage and its vast territory, it helps explain the low rates in towns such as *Bulla Regia* and *Uthina*, always independent.<sup>285</sup> Outside the Northeast, building epigraphy was never

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<sup>281</sup> Especially from Gallienus onward; Hugoniot 2006: 392. Priesthoods were now recruited from more influential people, and lower decurionates at Carthage were no longer open to ambitious small town elites. For the Carthaginians’ economic hold over the province, see ch. V p. 290-1.

<sup>282</sup> So Hugoniot 2006: 398, Poinssot 1962: 72, Gascou 1972: 173, 181, 196-7, 226-7. Birley 1989: 147 describes it as Carthage being “cut down to size.”

<sup>283</sup> Gascou 1972: 162, 165, 171, and esp. 231-2. It should be noted however that municipalization was empire-wide, which Gascou admits (p. 37), but claims it was more strongly felt in Africa. Dossey 2010: 113 quotes examples where the state “extended self-government to villages” in Thrace, Syria and Anatolia, showing that the policy was not specifically African. However, to brand the new towns “villages” is beside the point – they were no less urban than their municipal neighbors. Their dependence was due to the eminence of Carthage, not their size or aspect.

<sup>284</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 311-2 notes the fall in *ob honorem* activity, and argues that building for office was replaced with other motivations, such as religious sentiment and generosity. He admits that these motives were always present, and I would argue that construction primarily for such reasons continued at much the same (low) rates as previously, and should not be seen as replacing construction for local offices.

<sup>285</sup> See above pp. 63-4. Especially *Uthina* is suggestive since it was encapsulated in the *pertica*, but behaves nothing like its neighbors in terms of building epigraphy. Paul Scheding (see above n. 255) points to differences also in the actual urban topography between *pertica* and non-*pertica* towns. The former, he argues, had dispersed townscapes which he claims is due to their dependence, in contrast to the more nucleated independent towns outside it.

employed at the same rate. Yet, the towns in the periphery were not less “Roman” – several are veteran colonies and many show strong ties to both emperor and senate. Nor are they fledglings, but were firmly established already by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> c., long before the epigraphic boom commenced. There is no “natural” explanation as to why the very well preserved Flavian colony *Sufetula* should produce a mere 4 pre-Diocletianic building inscriptions, the far smaller and less well excavated ruins of *Thignica* twice as many. There are fewer inscriptions also at *Ammaedara* and *Thubursicu Numidarum* than there should be considering the size and monumentality of the towns and their rate of excavation.<sup>286</sup> The inhabitants of these colonies simply never engaged in the practice at a comparable rate; *ob honorem* construction took off slowly, likely in emulation of the Northeast, but never became common practice. Without the connection to Carthage, which brought a preoccupation with documenting the deed permanently, it simply carried less meaning.

This brings us to the principal flaw with well nigh all the above explanations: they fail to take into account the vagaries of the medium, but treat the epigraphic record as if it were a good representation of actual construction, which simply is not the case: it records certain processes, by certain agents, and leaves most types of construction that their arguments hinge upon out of the equation. Furthermore, it should be noted that the mid- to late 3rd c. texts do not record three steps or a single column in a sanctuary, as many of the “boom” year texts did, but only concern grander projects. The extent to which the drop reflects diminished actual construction is, I believe, impossible to establish. My guess is, at least somewhat fewer temples did get erected by *flamines* in the old *pertica* towns, whether due to the changed formal position of these towns or

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<sup>286</sup> At *Thubursicu Numidarum*, inscriptions have been retrieved only from the time of Trajan (2 items) when it was promoted to the status of municipality, under Septimius Severus (2), and Diocletian (2).

to other causes. James Rives, in his study of African religion in the context of municipalities, does not mention the drop in temple construction, but implies that other religious systems, and in particular Christianity, were supplanting the older cults. It is doubtful to my mind that this would have created such a drastic downward turn, but it may account for a part of it.<sup>287</sup> He describes a scenario where the political control of public religion held by the *ordines*, a characteristic of the Roman Republic, gradually lost its grip due to the loss of political authority of said *ordines* through subjection to Rome. As a consequence, the civic cults were not rigidly enforced, and their importance diminished, leaving the door open for the better organized Christian faith. Though not an implausible scenario, it fails to explain why the first signs of temple construction appears a century *after* the subjection to Rome, and peaked another two centuries later, where one would expect a sloping curve from an initial high. He also describes the mid 3rd c. as the first time imperial authorities sought to enforce participation in pagan cult practices, which one might expect to have produced more, not less, publicly posted testimonies to the construction of shrines. Instead, the record reached its lowest point.

Of other building types – or other builders – the material tells us little. The very idea of the drop needs to be tempered; the peak under Septimius Severus and sons is to some extent due to the excessively long imperial titles used, which were more widely applied to construction than during any other period, which makes both survival and identification of fragments more likely. *Damnatio memoriae* should be kept in mind as a factor affecting survival, if not as a deterrent from construction. Although 1st c. rates are generally very low, the complete absence of items from the 14 year reign of Nero seems artificial. The absence of any item that dates to the 4 years

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<sup>287</sup> Rives 1995: 14, 186, 248-52.

under Elagabalus also raises an eyebrow, and if this is caused at least in part by his *damnatio*, it has consequences for the later 3rd c. record, as it would affect almost all rulers after Severus Alexander. Frequent condemnation may also have brought changes to the way epigraphy was used, steering builders away from stone inscriptions to more easily replaceable media. To inscribe a dedicatory text in stone in the mid- to late 3rd c. would have lent the project an old-fashioned air, high sounding and solemn. This may perhaps help explain why the conventions for the items that do appear are so stable; changes to the actual content consist of nuances rather than fundamentals. If less frequently, *flamines*, *duumviri* and towns still erected and inscribed temples and arches in the Carthaginian hinterland, and their inscriptions present the same elements with the same tedious precision: private individuals build to obtain local positions, mention family members, and itemize career tracks and money spent, as in the following example:

*Victoriis Au[gustis] | [Imp(eratoris) Ca]es(aris) M. Claudi Taciti pii felicitis Aug(usti) pont(ificis) ma[x(imi) ---] | [Q. N]umisius Primus aedilic(ius) du(u)mvirali[c(ius) aedem? quam] | [ex] HS XVI mil(ibus) n(ummum) facere promiserat mult[iplicata pecunia cum] | [Num]isiis Praetextato et Primo filis et Nonia[--- coniuge perfecit?] | [et cert]amina pugilum edidit. Quam et [---].<sup>288</sup>*

As before, the inscriptions begin with imperial dedications and end with descriptions of the dedicatory ceremonials. The florid, high-flown phrases that were beginning to creep into

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<sup>288</sup> *ILPBardo 389, Membressa* (Medjez el-Bab). “To the Augustan Victories of the Emperor Caesar M. Claudius Tacitus, pious and blessed Augustus, pontifex maximus... *Q. Numisius Primus* ex-aedile, ex-duumvir finished the temple that he promised to build from 16,000 sesterces for additional funds together with his sons the *Numisii Praetextatus* and *Primus* and his wife *Nonia*... and arranged boxing competitions. And...” Another example dates to Gallienus, a Neptune shrine (i.e., a *nymphaeum*) at *Thignica* (*AE* 2006.1762) built by *P. Valerius Victor Numisianus Sallustianus*, equestrian and *flamen perpetuus*, promised by his father and mother for their flaminates, and specifying money spent by both generations. It begins with a lengthy imperial dedication.

contemporary honorifics, full of rhetorical overtones stressing the moral qualities and community spirit of the honorees, had not yet entered building epigraphy.<sup>289</sup> The medium must by then have been largely obsolete, the few new items emulating older examples rather than innovating.

To sum up, building inscription do not at any point in time provide the whole picture of how Africans engaged with public construction, and they should not be used to gauge levels of prosperity. There are simply too many issues, from the vast holes in our data due to uneven survival, retrieval, and publication, to circumstances affecting how the medium was applied, such as what social strata participated, under what circumstances, what manner of structures were inscribed, how the texts were formulated, and whether they were rendered in a durable material. It does not represent construction, but a medial presentation of certain aspects of construction. Can they be used as evidence of construction? With caution, I would say, yes. I agree with Saastamoinen, who points out that the presence of building inscriptions (at least for the most part) does show that construction happened, but it is important to remember that its absence is not evidence for the opposite.<sup>290</sup> Can it be used to trace the level of involvement of benefactors in public architecture? This is highly doubtful in my opinion, and especially fraught are arguments about their presence or absence in the 3rd c. The high ranking regional elites that performed the most stunning acts of euergetism did not account for the “boom” record, and one should not assume that the mechanisms that brought the decrease in frequency affected them in

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<sup>289</sup> Africa has even been blamed for being the original source of the high-flown formulas that start to show up in honorifics toward the later period, e.g. Crété 2010: 211 (based on *IRT* 565 from *Lepcis Magna*). However, this style is not evident there until the 4th c. Saastamoinen 2000: 1689 blames the Late Antique specimen for pleonasm and tautology, wordiness and inexactness – in comes rhetoric, out goes technicality. *Idem* 2008a: 163, 169-170, 181-183 on the “late style,” which he claims is different enough to merit speaking of a different genre.

<sup>290</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 34-35, 180-183. He suggests saturation as the cause but admits it is only a partial explanation, as temples dominate the record.

the same way as it did local notables. The best source for euergetism remains statue bases, which is mainly how we know of their building projects in any case. Can building epigraphy tell us how the architectural landscape of the towns was maintained through the 3rd c.? No, for this I believe archaeological material has to be consulted. It is important when doing so, however, to watch out for circularity, since much urban architecture in Africa is dated on inscriptional data. Anna Leone in her survey of 3rd c. construction in African towns claims that they show no sign of decline or shrinkage, except in a few isolated cases that are well balanced with examples to the contrary. Yet she maintains that the 3rd c. hit the towns hard, which she bases entirely on the rates of building inscriptions from which the majority of her catalogued items are derived.<sup>291</sup> It seems epigraphy and archaeology produce very different pictures of 3rd c. urban architecture, and I believe archaeology to be the more trustworthy guide on the matter.

What the material *can* be used for is to understand the aspirations of certain social strata, and how these related to the towns as honorific milieus, providing an image of their self-perception and aims. The role of temple construction as a means for local town elites to promote their families is notable, as is the continuing association of a particular sanctuary with a family through generations. It also provides hints as to whom different classes of builders sought (or did not seek) to address themselves; the *plebs*, peers, imperial authorities, or Carthaginian elites. For the Diocletianic material, it is important to note that although less frequent, the inscriptions of local builders contained the same elements, and the same language, as before until the very end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., and that they also appeared in the same general locations in the Northeast.

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<sup>291</sup> Leone 2007: 49-51, 82-89, 282. She places the first true signs of decline in public spaces at the end of the 4th c., but maintains nonetheless that the towns maintained their functionality well beyond the Vandal period. Rambaldi 2009: 112 comes to the same conclusion in her survey of construction of the soldier emperor era.



Fig. 7. Bridge raised by Trajan over the Medjerda river at *Simitthus*, the imperial quarries.

### III. THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT IN AFRICAN EPIGRAPHY

In the previous chapter I examined how public construction was used to further the interests of local builders of various social standing, what their relations were to the towns built in, and what roles were played by the medial presentation of their projects. Although locals are active as builders also under Diocletian to a considerable degree (which will be treated in the following chapter), it is the record of construction by imperial officials that truly stands out in relation to earlier reigns. But did it differ in frequency only, or in other aspects as well? In this chapter, I will examine how emperors and imperial magistrates were visible in the epigraphic material of the African towns before Diocletian, and who controlled this visibility. In the first half, I will discuss the role of the emperors themselves. I will begin with emperors as builders, and how they are attested in this role in Africa, followed by a discussion on other ways in which the emperor had an influence over the built landscape of the area. These include legislation, but also, I would argue, imperial landownership and the apparatus that it entailed. I will also examine what roles were played by honorific media such as imperial statues in the relations between emperors and locals. In the second part, I discuss the visibility in epigraphy of imperial representatives: the proconsul, the legates, and the *curatores rei publicae*. A recurring issue has been to determine how the emperor and his magistrates were framed: as private individuals and benefactors, or as officials in the service of the state. When imperial magistrates appear in the former role, it is far from clear that their actions should be seen as state intervention. In order to define these two roles, which are by no means mutually exclusive, I have set out some criteria based on the epigraphic behavior of emperors on the one hand, private locals on the other.



### III.1 The emperor and construction

#### *The emperors as builders: magistrates and benefactors*

To build was one of the canonical duties of the emperor, abundantly attested from the very beginning of the empire in the *Res Gestae* of Augustus. Emperors building in person are mostly attested in the city of Rome, but literary texts and inscriptions add a number of instances in the Eastern provinces as well as a few in the Western. The level of personal involvement of the emperor with these projects is the subject of considerable discussion, as is whether they should be seen as singular projects in locations which were of particular interest to a sovereign (for the most part Hadrian), or as a more overarching construction policy, a “Baupolitik.” That such a policy ever existed has been largely rejected in recent years. However, even if architecture was not consciously employed to broadcast an ideology, central government certainly dealt with public construction in a number of ways, both as builders and as legislators. Rather than the personal involvement of a prince, my study concerns construction undertaken by the imperial state, which includes works undertaken by imperial magistrates in the routine handling of their offices. Projects that would qualify as construction by the state are for instance the initiative during the reign of Tiberius to build roads in Illyria, or under Marcus to build walls across a slew of Balkan towns.<sup>292</sup> Many inscriptions also present an emperor as the actual builder. Only rarely did the ruler in question ever set foot in the area. Yet, he was framed as though actively involved, and this circumstance is of interest in and of itself. How is such imperial construction presented, and what relations does this express between central authorities and provincial subjects? What expectations did the latter have on the emperor and the state?

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<sup>292</sup> Attested in several of the main cities, both on the plateau such as *Philippopolis* (Plovdiv, *CIL* 3.6121) and the coast, as at *Salona* (e.g. *CIL* 3.1979-80, 84, *CIL* 3.6374).

How to identify construction by emperors is a vexed question. Even the more reliable indicators that we have – all scholars for instance agree on the validity of inscriptions that give the names of emperors in the nominative – are not entirely secure, and what processes such inscriptions reflect is uncertain.<sup>293</sup> As much as we might need solid criteria to determine the involvement of an emperor in a provincial building project, we simply do not have them. The reality was very likely a collaboration between a number of agents: officials, army commanders, and local elites, who are known to have contributed to projects presented as imperial on several occasions.<sup>294</sup> Stephen Mitchell's survey of imperial construction in the Eastern provinces describes it as a twofold affair: beyond a number of infrastructural and defensive projects undertaken by the state, emperors also built as private individuals and benefactors erecting public works in towns. As private men, emperors built much the same objects as their local counterparts did, that is, temples, porticoes, streets and markets. These contributions, while certainly welcome, did not thus represent structures that the locals were not ready and able to provide for themselves.<sup>295</sup> While such projects tend to be explained with the personal whim of the emperor,

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<sup>293</sup> Mitchell 1987: 343 gives an example from *Cyme* (IGR 4.1619) which claims that Augustus and Agrippa restored a shrine, when in fact all they had done was command that *opera sacra* which had ended up in private hands be returned to sacral ownership.

<sup>294</sup> Horster 2001: 4 for one rejects speaking of “central government” as engaged in construction, demanding if so a coherent plan employing public architecture for specific aims. She insists on a strict focus on the person of the emperor as willing and funding the projects. Few projects listed as “imperial” would hold up to scrutiny if so; it is clear that the legates executed, and probably also planned, most building projects styled as by an emperor in the nominative. The state does tend to carry out certain tasks, at least in Africa.

<sup>295</sup> Mitchell 1987: 352, 357, rejecting the view that locals and emperors built different objects. The fact that only emperors are associated with aqueducts was not, according to him, due to a division of tasks but to such being unattractive to local elites, seeing that they lay outside the city. This I would reject; aqueducts are among the most high profile items the Roman world knew, and the amount of water a city had access to was something to boast about. Aqueducts could be presented with intramural inscriptions on fountainheads, as in Rome.

Mitchell argues that one of the main motivations for an emperor to build is to forge ties of loyalty to local populations, in analogy to how construction in the city of Rome had always been an important aspect of the relations between the emperors and the Roman *plebs*.<sup>296</sup> He thus accepts a certain political element to urban architecture by emperors, who recognized the need to obtain the approval of provincial populations. Mitchell suggests no such political agenda for the more practical construction projects. However, infrastructure could serve such purposes as well, amply brought out by a letter exchange between Trajan and Pliny the Younger regarding a canal in Bithynia, from which it is clear that the main benefit from the point of view of the emperor is not utility, but to bolster the prestige of Rome in comparison to Asian kings.<sup>297</sup> The populations in the region would become more aware of Rome's presence and ability, and, as a consequence, remain loyal. A similar mix of utility and policy is likely to have informed the plentiful construction of amenities in army camps, courting the goodwill of the troops quite as much as supporting military operations.<sup>298</sup>

Marietta Horster, who has examined construction by emperors in the Western provinces until Diocletian, also describes a duality of roles. On the one hand, the emperor could build as an official – the highest magistrate of the state – on the other, as a private man and aristocrat, extending the networks of his family. The word “private” is not meant to imply that Roman aristocrats did not have public roles; indeed, it could be argued that they were never “private.” Rather, it is used to describe the elite positioning characteristic of an oligarchy, as opposed to acting as a bureaucrat carrying out duties on behalf of the imperial state. Horster distinguishes

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<sup>296</sup> Mitchell 1987: 335-336.

<sup>297</sup> Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.41.1 and 5.

<sup>298</sup> In Africa, the camp of the *III Augusta* at *Lambaesis* outshines all other locations in terms of construction by emperors and by imperial officials.

the two roles through the use of the verbs *dedit* for a private act of euergetism, *fecit* for the fulfillment of an official duty.<sup>299</sup> The former is not uncommon in Italy, but rare outside the peninsula. Imperial construction in the Western provinces was a rather nuts-and-bolts affair; the types of objects built were for the most part defenses and infrastructure such as roads and bridges. Beyond the works of Claudius and Marcus mentioned above, a typical initiative is the *Via Augusta* restored by Augustus in Spain. The Dalmatian roads as well as the Spanish had the rather prosaic aim to support extraction of minerals from local mines, but they were nonetheless prominently broadcast – these grand engineering projects no doubt also served to strengthen the hold on the regions in question, not only by their employment by the military but by displaying the power and resources of Rome. In Dalmatia, a serious rebellion had recently been put down, and demonstrating the presence of the Roman government would have been expedient.<sup>300</sup>

Strategic and commercial interests lay at the bottom also at Horster's third category, of ports. Of public architecture in towns, there is precious little; what there was, she claims, was motivated by emergencies (and at times personal presence), and does not betray any coherent attitude toward construction that could be termed a "Baupolitik."<sup>301</sup> While Waldherr argued that emperors were always eager for opportunities to build, Horster suggests on the contrary that the role of the emperor as benefactor in the provinces was consciously suppressed. She compares it

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<sup>299</sup> Horster 2001: 50-1. In her wish to frame the emperor as benefactor she excludes projects that emphasize utility, such as roadwork or bridges, thus reinforcing her thesis that emperors built the same items as local elites (p.11-2); however, judging by her own extensive tables, they did not.

<sup>300</sup> That of Bato of Dalmatia and Pinnes of Pannonia, over whom Tiberius celebrated a triumph in 12 or 13 CE. The legate *P. Cornelius Dolabella* constructed military roads through the region in 14-20 CE (e.g. *CIL* 3.3198a-b, 3199). A slew of roads traversed the coastal mountain range, rich in ore and with a specially appointed procurator for the *argentaria*. Their importance is noted especially through the 3rd c (with milestones *CIL* 3.13306-7, 9-10, 12-14, 16). On Dalmatian mines, Škegro 2006.

<sup>301</sup> Horster 2001: 3, though accepting this for the city of Rome.

to the way the *dedit-fecit* dichotomy plays out in Italy. The euergetic stance reflected by *dedit* was reserved for the *regiones*, while *fecit* is used for all projects by an emperor at Rome itself. To present the emperor as benefactor in the city of Rome would have been too strong a statement of his personal power for the senatorial aristocracy to stomach, and instead the more impersonal, and thus less assertive, official role was favored. Similarly, according to Horster, in the provinces emperors opted to keep a low profile in the provinces in order not to antagonize the local elites on whom their control of provincial populations ultimately relied.<sup>302</sup> That the way emperors and their construction projects were framed was adapted to the social situation was thus established practice from the very outset. This further implies that silence in terms of imperial construction in the provinces can be somewhat deceptive, not accurately reflecting the level of involvement on the part of central authorities.

#### *The emperor as builder in Africa*

The Western conventions are well attested in North Africa, with mainly roads and bridges in evidence together with a small number of walls. A military focus for the majority of the works is evident. Several inscriptions testify to construction in the camps at *Lambaesis*, not only by emperors who visited in person.<sup>303</sup> The *legio III Augusta* builds in its own right on a couple of

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<sup>302</sup> Horster 2001: 19.

<sup>303</sup> E.g. Pius (*BCTH* 1932/33.307), Commodus (*CIL* 8.2697), Septimius Severus who restored the amphitheatre at *Lambaesis*, although not when present, seeing that the inscription dates to 194 (*AE* 1955.137). An aqueduct built during the reign of Alexander Severus was a proud project that occasioned inscriptions also by the legate who executed it (*CIL* 8.2658-9, *AE* 1973.646). Hadrian is the only present emperor to leave traces, in a long inscription that gives his speech to the soldiers stationed there (*CIL* 8.2532).

occasions, which could probably be regarded as imperial construction as well.<sup>304</sup> Numerous items were executed through army units, signaled by phrases such as *per vexillationem* or *per instantiam*. For the most part, these were the projects of a legate or procurator, given in the ablative; when the personal involvement of an emperor is suggested by the nominative, this is largely fictional.<sup>305</sup> Some inscriptions, using forms of *iubeo*, describe an emperor as having requested the project, some that he permitted or authorized the works (*ex auctoritate*).<sup>306</sup> The extent to which these reflect imperial construction is not always clear; that said, the same can be said for most projects where an emperor is framed as directly responsible.

How they were funded is also an open question, since direct information is for the most part lacking in the inscriptions. There is no formula habitually applied to imperial funding, and very few texts that present the emperor or his magistrates as builders mention any manner of money. An emperor in the nominative is by no means a guarantee that he paid personally; it can even appear together with *p(ecunia) p(ublica)*, which shows that the matter is far from straightforward. Saastamoinen suggests that the funding supplement, at least in such cases, refers to the inscription itself and not the building.<sup>307</sup> One project is presented as by the emperor, *per*

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<sup>304</sup> *CIL* 8.2705, *AE* 1954.137.

<sup>305</sup> The list of items presented as by emperors but carried out by legates, legions and procurators is long: *CIL* 8.2478, 2488, 2579a-e, 2693-4, 2698, 4203, 17842-3, 17727, 18247, 18509, 20816, 20845; *AE* 1913.157; 1929.133; 1950.59; 1955, 134-5; 1971.508; 1975.953; 1995.1789-90; *IRT* 880, 913; *IAM* 2.404; *BCTH* 1907.324; 1932/33.432; *AfrRom* 11 p.1369; *Libyca* 1953 p. 240.

<sup>306</sup> Caesar ordered an aqueduct to be raised at Carthage (*AE* 1951.71), while Hadrian ordered a horreum at *Iomnium*, built by army units and thus likely to be seen imperial as much as any of those that give the emperor in the nominative (*AE* 1957.176). More ambiguous are a road between Cirta and Rusicade built *per possessores* and *ex auctoritate* of Hadrian (*CIL* 8.10322), and, at the same time, bridges *per* the city of *Cirta*, also *ex auctoritate* of the emperor (*CIL* 8.10296). *Per* may refer to funding. Saastamoinen 2008a: 119 claims it indicates compulsory labor, which does not quite seem to fit here seeing the considerable status of the people involved.

<sup>307</sup> *Calama*, *AE* 1981.878, dating to Constantine. Saastamoinen 2008a: 222 n. 835.

*populares suos*, curated by a procurator and executed on the *instantia* of two army officers.<sup>308</sup>

The involvement of the *populares* can be interpreted as corvée labor, or perhaps more likely as contributions of money, seeing that elements included in a building inscription represented points of pride. The process may have been one where the emperor willed or permitted the project, locals contributed money, the procurator coordinated, and the army built. A similar text comes from *Castellum Dianense*, where walls were raised by the emperor (in the nominative), *per colonos* of the Castellum.<sup>309</sup> Another text has the emperor in the nominative but continues to mention what seems a private project, which shows how ambiguous these texts often are.<sup>310</sup> In most cases, the likely scenario for funding is a combination of assets available on the spot – tax payments from the town or province, requisitions of labor, transports and funds, army workforce and expertise.<sup>311</sup> One text describes how streets were paved using the revenue of public lands at Lepcis Magna, with the funding mentioned only to celebrate that the lands in question had been restored to the town after the war with Tacfarinas. The money thus came from the town, but the proconsul is presented as the builder, availing himself of (or I would suggest, permitting the use for construction of) the resources of the city.<sup>312</sup> That tax revenue was expected to be used in the region can be seen in the frustration on the part of the provincial council at the construction of an

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<sup>308</sup> *CIL* 8.8828, walls at *Tubusuctu* (El Kseur) in 230-5.

<sup>309</sup> *CIL* 8.2701, dating to 234.

<sup>310</sup> *CIL* 8.21514, Quiza, Mauretania Caesariensis. A wish to broadcast involvement by an emperor whenever possible can be seen in *IRT* 358-9, where Hadrian's title in the nominative takes up most of the text; however he had only advised or granted, *consuluit*, the project, which was paid for by a private benefactor.

<sup>311</sup> The brief note in the *Historia Augusta* on how Severus Alexander performed construction gives the same impression, using tax revenue of the province, *SHA Severus Alexander* 44.7-9.

<sup>312</sup> *IRT* 330a-b, 331.

aqueduct at Alexandria Troas for eating up such a large portion of it, to the detriment of the other towns of the area.<sup>313</sup>

The objects built are either infrastructural – mainly roads, bridges and aqueducts – defenses such as walls or forts, or civic architecture at military encampments, most frequently at *Lambaesis*. The formulas that accompany them are divided by audience, with more flowery phrases used when directly addressing troops. This is especially noticeable under Septimius Severus and his sons, who are sometimes styled as *propagatores imperi* and use long imperial titles.<sup>314</sup> Such phrases are however atypical, and the norm is to use brief and no-nonsense titles, in a manner that seems in inverse proportion to the actual involvement of the emperor: the more likely the project in question was the emperor's own, the less elaborate the text. A typical example is a text commemorating a building project by Hadrian at *Rapidum* in Mauretania Caesariensis, which is brief and to the point.<sup>315</sup>

In the parts of Africa under scrutiny in this study, there is precious little that resembles the activities described above, even from the time when the legion was stationed at *Ammaedara* or *Theveste*. Discounting the items from the time of Caesar, when defenses were built on Cap Bon,

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<sup>313</sup> The expensive project was championed when *corrector* of the free cities by Herodes Atticus, whose father eventually paid for much of it; Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* 548-9. Burton 2004: 327-331 quotes a long row of examples from the 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> c., in all provinces, where governors build on behalf of the emperors, using what was available on the spot such as army personnel and often taxes or voluntary contributions by locals. That the governor had full access to the finances of local towns is clear, and also that he likely willed many projects presented as by the emperor. All objects that he mentions are roads, walls and aqueducts, thus the same cadre as in Africa.

<sup>314</sup> *Propagatores imperii*: *AE* 1995.1970 (Tatilti 198-9), *CIL* 8.2705 (*Lambaesis* 200-211). Long titles at a winter camp in Mauretania Caesariensis, *Libyca* 1953.240. Rhetorical additions to the texts began with Commodus, as seen in *CIL* 8.20816, and are exclusive to military contexts.

<sup>315</sup> *CIL* 8.20833: *Imp(erator) Caes(ar) divi Traiani | Parthici fil(ius) divi Nervae | nepos Traianus Hadri(anus) Aug(ustus) pontif(ex) max(imus) | trib(unicia) pot(estate) VI co(n)s(ul) III proco(n)s(ul) | fecit.*



there is barely any construction by an emperor attested in the study area at all.<sup>316</sup> Carthage – queen of ports – likely saw a fair share of construction by emperors at all times, although the lack of epigraphy from this city denies us the possibility to understand how it was presented. The grand Antonine baths were most likely imperial, as were probably also the city’s massive aqueducts and cisterns.<sup>317</sup> Attempts at associating a structure with an emperor without epigraphy or literary texts as a guide remain rather unconvincing, to my mind, such as the assertion that the amphitheatre at *Thysdrus* is imperial due to its great size. This is by no means implausible, but cannot be substantiated.<sup>318</sup> Horster has also firmly rejected that an imperial name (such as the *basilica Ulpia* at *Lepcis Magna*) constitutes proof that the emperor was involved in raising the building.<sup>319</sup> Outside of the exceptional city of Carthage, there is not a single example of urban public construction in the study area presented as the personal project of an emperor – it seems no sovereign maintained an image as benefactor to the towns of the area. None of these were touched by the spontaneous generosity of Hadrian as he was passing through, and the same is the case for Septimius Severus, the only other emperor to be personally present in the area before the arrival of Maximian in 297: neither has signed his name to a single public building, altar, or other dedication.<sup>320</sup> It should be stated at once that the same is true of Maximian, who is known

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<sup>316</sup> Defenses by a legate at *Curubis*, *CIL* 8.979.

<sup>317</sup> An text recording the construction of an aqueduct by the city of Carthage (*ILPBardo* 2.9 a-b) may be emended to imply the *permissu*, and perhaps also the *voluntate*, of the emperor, but the attribution is not secure.

<sup>318</sup> Kuhoff 2006: 2254. He attributes it to Gordian III on account of *Thysdrus* being the town where the revolt of Gordian I was sparked. Many dates have been offered for the amphitheatre, e.g. Jouffroy 1986: 243 who dates it to the end of the 3rd c.

<sup>319</sup> Horster 2001: 102-111. A basilica so named was restored under Diocletian (*IRT* 543). On gifts, bricks and marbles, Mitchell 345-7; Horster 2001: 117, 215-6.

<sup>320</sup> On imperial visits to Africa, Guédon 2006. Africa did not suggest itself as a destination to visit, she argues; Hadrian’s sole object with his journey was to inspect the troops.

to have constructed at Carthage but who is not attested in the role of builder elsewhere.<sup>321</sup> As far as can be told from its epigraphic material, the presence of an emperor in the study area did not result in public structures that framed him as a builder and benefactor, at least not outside of Carthage. Broadcasting the personal care of emperors was only a concern when the audience of the inscriptions consisted of troops, whose loyalty was at all times essential. The ungarrisoned towns in Africa Proconsularis and Byzacena warranted no such attention.

The few instances in my region when an emperor does build in his own name all represent infrastructure, and their formulas share little with those of the local elites. There are 4 texts in total that mention involvement on the part of emperors. These include an aqueduct at *Thysdrus* by Vespasian and three bridges, one by Tiberius at *Vaga*, one by Trajan at *Simitthus*, and one by Hadrian at *Ammaedara*:

*Vaga*, Tiberius: *Ti(berius) Caesar(i) divi | Aug(usti) f(ilius) Augustus | pontif(ex) max(imus) trib(unicia) | pot(estate) XXXI co(n)s(ul) IIII | dedit | C(aius) Vibius Marsus pr(o)|co(n)s(ul) III dedica(vit).*<sup>322</sup>

*Thysdrus*, Vespasian: *[---] Vespasian[us ---] | Caesar Aug(ustus) [---] | [--- pe]rduxerunt per[---] | [---] VM co(n)s(ulem) II pro[co(n)sulem) ---].*<sup>323</sup>

*Simitthus*, Trajan: *[Imp(erator) C]aesar divi | [Ne]rvae f. Nerva | [Tr]aianus optimus | [Au]g(ustus) Germ(anicus) Dacic(us) pont(ifex) | [ma]x(imus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XVI imp(erator) VI | co(n)s(ul) VI p(ater) p(atriciae) | [pon]tem novum a fundamentis | [op]era militum suorum et | pecunia sua | [p]rovinciae Africae fecit.*<sup>324</sup>

<sup>321</sup> See chapter I n. 1 and p. 36.

<sup>322</sup> *CIL* 8.10568: “Tiberius Caesar Augustus, son of the deified Augustus, pontifex maximus, 31 times tribune, 4 times consul, bestowed. *C. Vibius Marsus*, thrice proconsul, dedicated.”

<sup>323</sup> *AE* 1991.1635: “...Vespasian Caesar Augustus ... conducted through the administration of ... twice consul, proconsul...”

<sup>324</sup> *CIL* 8.10117: “Emperor Caesar Nerva Trajan mightiest Augustus, son of the deified Nerva, conqueror of Germania and Dacia, pontifex maximus, 16 times tribune, 7 times consul, father of

*Ammaedara*, Hadrian: [Imp(erator) Caesar] | [divi Traia]ni | [Parthi]ci f. | [divi N]ervae | nepos | Traianus | Hadrianus Aug(ustus) | pontif(ex) maximus | trib(unicia) pot(estate) VII co(n)s(ul) III | pontem fecit | per leg(ionem) III Aug(ustam) | Sex. Iulio Maiore | leg(ato) Aug(usti) pro pr(aetore).<sup>325</sup>

Two further inscriptions feature the emperor not as builder but as “enabler.” One comes from a forum portico at *Thugga* described as in part funded by Gallienus, *ex indulgentia ac liberalitate*, the other from an arch at *Uchi Maius* raised *ex indulgentia* of Severus Alexander.<sup>326</sup> There is no reason to assume that the emperors personally had much to do with either project, and the phrases likely refer to freedom from taxes rather than funding specifically aimed at their erection. Both texts commemorate the elevation of the towns to *coloniae*, in the case of *Uchi Maius* straight from *pagus* and with locals initiating and building. The item from *Thugga* is presented as raised by an imperial official, a *curator rei publicae*, and mentions the *deductio* as performed by the emperor (with only the dedicatory ceremonies by the local *flamen*); though clearly an imperial project, it appears to have been initiated by the provincial government rather than by the emperor himself.<sup>327</sup>

Except for *Vaga*, which was an important crossroads connecting Carthage with the towns in the West, the locations are in or by cities where the ties to central government were at all times strongly felt, while there is no instance in areas which have a high concentration of building

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the realm, raised a new bridge from the foundations through the labor of the soldiers, for his own money, for the province of Africa.”

<sup>325</sup> *AE* 1995.1652: “Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, son of the deified Trajan, grandson of the deified Nerva, pontifex maximus, 7 times tribune, thrice consul, raised the bridge through the *legio III Augusta*, under the legate Sex. Iulius Maius.

<sup>326</sup> *Thugga*: *CIL* 8.10620; *Uchi Maius* *CIL* 8.1313.

<sup>327</sup> Mitchell 1987: 346, 364 assumes that projects labeled *ex indulgentia* were willed by the emperor, and considers tax remission simply as a handy means to transfer funds for the projects. Horster 2001: 72-5 is more skeptical and calls it “enabling,” and I agree – had they actually been willed and paid for by an emperor, they would not have been presented as raised by other agents.

inscriptions by locals (i.e., in the *pertica* of Carthage). The texts are succinct, and quite different from the elite examples surveyed in the previous chapter. They contain the bare minimum of information, using brief imperial titles and offering no personal information for the legate or proconsul who executed the work, neither family nor *cursus*. These no-nonsense inscriptions evoke no festivities or ceremonials, but simply state what was built, in as concise a fashion as possible.<sup>328</sup> They express no relation whatsoever to the locations where the items are built, and apart from the very wide term *provinciae Africae* applied in the Trajanic inscription do not even mention them. No item gives any sense of the person of the emperor being involved with the project or with the area, not even the one item built by Hadrian, who was himself present.

#### *The involved emperor? Milestones, laws and land*

An exception to the low profile of emperors in the study area may be represented by milestones, which usually feature the names of the emperors in the nominative and sometimes describe them explicitly as builders.<sup>329</sup> I have chosen not to treat milestones on a par with building inscriptions, for a number of reasons. For one, it is far from clear that they reflect actual construction.

Although the instances dating to Vespasian (5 items) and Hadrian (30) likely should be seen as actual roadwork, for several other reigns this is open to question. Post Hadrian, there are fewer than 5 attested in total until Caracalla, when the record explodes (78 in my sample) in ways that

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<sup>328</sup> By contrast, texts that mention the *indulgentia* of the emperor are as wordy as those that describe other local projects. The item from *Thugga* (CIL 8.10620) is more than 90 words long.

<sup>329</sup> They generally consist of the name of the emperor in the nominative and the mileage, more rarely including the name of a legate and/or army unit that undertakes the work and the stretch of road attended to. A typical example dating to Caracalla; *AE* 2006.1780, El Gorraia: *Imp(erator) Caesar | M(arcus) Aurelius | Antoninus | Pius Felix Aug(ustus) | Parthicus max(imus) | Britannic(us) [ma]x(imus) | Germanic(us) [max(imus)] | trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIX co(n)s(ul) IIII | p(ater) p(atriciae) restit(uit) | CXLIII*.

are unlikely to reflect actual construction. They continue to be numerous through the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. even under the more obscure emperors (such as 9 for Tacitus), and likely were routinely switched out by the provincial administration from time to time. Statements devoid of content are not an issue for this study, which is primarily concerned with presentation, but milestones appear in many ways to be closer to honorific statues than to building epigraphy. This is especially evident in the later periods when the emperors' names generally appear in the dative or ablative, thus dedicated to, rather than by, emperors.<sup>330</sup> The doubt should however be extended to the entire imperial period. They are often treated as loyalty statements, but if so, it is not clear by whom, as they rarely include any names besides the emperors – whatever their role, they do not fulfill the same functions as imperial statues, as the benefit of associating oneself with the imperial name or image does not devolve on any town or person. Some Trajanic and Hadrianic items mention that a legate effected the roadwork, much on the pattern of imperial building inscriptions, and two examples from the same time period mention a community, the *Civitas Nybgeniorum*.<sup>331</sup> The vast majority, however, include only the name of the emperor in the nominative and the mileage, often with rather lengthy titles, a manner of milestone that continues to be erected until Carus.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Still under Aurelian, nominative forms occur (*IRT* 953), but most have become dedications, some including rhetorical epithets (*CIL* 8.22011, *perpetuo imperatori*; *CIL* 8.22103, *pacatissimo imperatori*). A transitory form that displays bad grammar has imperial titles in the dative followed by *restituit* (*CIL* 8.21985). The doubt however extends to the entire imperial period, even when the emperor is presented in the nominative. For instance, the same section of the *Via Appia* is claimed to have been built by Trajan several years in a row. Milestones from *Forum Appii* (Faiti): *CIL* 10.6826, 2nd consulate; *CIL* 10.6824 and *CIL* 10.6825, 3rd consulate; *CIL* 10.6834 and *CIL* 10, 5th consulate; *CIL* 10.6827, 6th consulate. For Trajan the “wall-wort,” see chapter II p. 112 n. 270.

<sup>331</sup> *AE* 1910.21-2. I make no claim to completeness, but my sample should be representative enough to be indicative of larger tendencies.

<sup>332</sup> The latest example in my sample is *CIL* 8.10956.

Two circumstances indicate that they are to be treated as statements made by imperial authorities rather than by locals. The first is their chronology, showing the lowest rates at the time when the activity of locals ballooned in epigraphy: only two (potential) cases date to the reign of Pius, none to Marcus or Commodus, and one to Septimius Severus.<sup>333</sup> A change in the process under Caracalla is evident, and seems lasting. There are also at times abrupt changes to the content that suggest intentionality, likely on the part of central authorities. This is the case of Maximinus Thrax, whose lengthy inscriptions break drastically with practices before or after. They have an interest in that they include some features not previously seen in African epigraphy which concern the role of central government toward provincial subjects. They all follow much the same format: after the names of emperor and son (in the nominative) follows a claim to have restored roads and/or bridges, with some of the flourishes that are to become standard in Late Antiquity: the emphasis on the sorry state of the roads before construction, and the moral qualities of the emperors through whose tireless care they had been restored to the travelers:

*...pontes vetustate conlab/sos et iter longa incuria / corruptum restituerunt / et pro sua infatigabili (p)ro/videntia pervium com/meantibus reddide/runt.*<sup>334</sup>

The suddenness and homogeneity in the employment (and non-employment) of milestones speak for an initiative (or lack thereof) above the level of the municipalities. Likewise, the spike under Caracalla is to my mind more likely a sign of conscious application of a long neglected medium

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<sup>333</sup> The unique texts that date to the reign of Pius are entirely different in formula and are, in fact, most likely not milestones. They mention imperial command and local execution, but do not state of what. *ILTun.* 1560: *[Ex auctoritate] / [et sententia] Imp(eratoris) / Antonini Aug(usti) Pii determina/tio [fac]ta publi/ca M[us]titanorum.*

<sup>334</sup> *AE* 2003.1972, *Sufes*.

for effect than a sudden and dramatic increase in roadwork. Some administrations from Caracalla onward, either the emperors themselves or the provincial governors, thus seem to have taken the opportunity to communicate their presence through milestones.,.

The expressions in the texts dating to the reign of Thrax have a parallel in a unique group of texts also associated with imperial authorities. Although outside the area here studied, they have an interest in that they share certain features with inscriptions that date to Diocletian. The dossier consists of 7 inscriptions that date from the reign of Severus Alexander through that of Philip, and are attributed to rural communities in the area of *Sitifis* (Sétif) in Mauretania.<sup>335</sup> They represent a departure from the norm in more ways than one. First, they are not discrete items but applied regionally, with the same formulas appearing in a number of nearby locations. Second, they include rhetorical flourishes invoking the success of the times and the emperor's role toward the locals, while as we have seen the typical imperial building inscriptions do no such thing (unless the audience were not locals, but army units).<sup>336</sup> Third, the locations are of no obvious significance, but represent peripheral farming communities tied to the *res privata*. These features will all be discussed in more depth in the chapters to follow.<sup>337</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Horster 2001: 161 underscores their uniqueness. An example is *AE* 1903.94: *Indulgentia novis(a)eculi | Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M. Antoni Gordiani invicti pii felicitis Aug(usti) | restitutoris orbis kastellum Vanarzanense{m} | quod antehac angusto spa[ti]o cinctum muro continebatur | nunc reparatis ac fotis viribus fiducia pacis hortan[te] | ad faciem maioris loci [pro]latum est Faltonio Restitu[t]i[ano] v(iro) e(gregio) praeside curante [Aur or A]elio Felice v(iro) e(gregio) proc(uratore) Aug(usti) n(ostri)*. For the others, *AE* 1930.47; *AE* 1966.594; *AE* 1917/18.68; *AE* 1966.593; *CIL* 8.20486-7; *CIL* 8.20602.

<sup>336</sup> The closest comparison within the study area is a statue base from *Thysdrus* (*ILTun.* 110), which hails Gordian III for his *indulgentia*, which surpassed that of all previous emperors.

<sup>337</sup> Another feature that makes them uncommon is that they concern city walls. They do not coincide with any military threat to the area in question, and Jouffroy 1986: 240-241 and Horster 2001: 159-161 both reject the view that defense was their primary purpose. Most of them date to

While these instances are isolated and unique, they lend momentary visibility to what is arguably the most pervasive aspect of the influence of the emperor on the region: imperial landownership. The relations of the emperors to African communities should not be seen solely through the filter of honorific media such as statues, as though they represented abstract entities, distant and charismatic. On the contrary, the emperors as landlords were a very present power. Various calculations of the amount of land owned by the private person of the emperor come to staggering figures, adding up to at least a sixth of all land in the study area.<sup>338</sup> Dennis Kehoe called the Medjerda valley the “hinterland for the city of Rome,” and Peter Ørsted has underscored the enormous impact of imperial landownership on the socio-economic landscape of the region.<sup>339</sup> Of interest for this study are the effects that, I will argue, it had on urbanization.

To establish ownership to any one property is for the most part doable only in the few cases when it generated epigraphy, the processes behind which were closely tied to towns. Estates can at times be identified through border stones, or a *vicus* behaving like a town (such as the handful treated in the previous chapter), but they often housed substantial *vici* without us knowing so as much as their names. Even in the cases when we do, ownership cannot always be established; attempts at distinguishing owners through terminology such as *saltus*, *fundus*, and *praedia* have proven inconclusive.<sup>340</sup> Empty swathes on the epigraphic maps were by no means

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Severus Alexander, before the dissolution of the *III Augusta*, a time when the troubles that were to plague the Western parts of North Africa had not yet commenced.

<sup>338</sup> Mackensen 1993: 480-1; also Mattingly 1997: 118-122, quoting Lepelley. On the distinction between *fiscus* and *res privata*, Zwâlve 2003, who argues that the difference is more or less void, at least from the local perspective.

<sup>339</sup> Kehoe 2007: 48-52, 1988: 19; Ørsted 1993: 116, 123. They suggest the distribution pattern of imperial estates to be deliberate, and that they offered favorable terms to the *coloni*.

<sup>340</sup> Lengrand 1996: 116 suggests *praedia* to be a wider term that can encompass both of the others. Dossey 2010: 92 claims *saltus* to be a separate large unit, *fundus* smaller and attached to



empty of estates or their *vici*: for instance, the almost silent High Steppe of Byzacena is known from survey data and production infrastructure to have been an area of much economic activity centered on estates. It is clear that imperial estates figured among these, as in all subregions of the study area. The famous group of texts from the Northeast that concern sharecroppers all derive from imperial estates, which are also well attested along the entire stretch of the West, as in the interior of Byzacena.<sup>341</sup> Imperial estates, if more rare, are known also for the inland of the Sahel.<sup>342</sup> A large apparatus was required to manage them, providing opportunities for men such as the procurator of estates in the regions of *Hippo Regius* and *Theveste*, *T. Flavius Macer*. A unique statue base to him from *Hippo Regius* offers a glimpse of the hierarchy associated with imperial properties. It was dedicated jointly by the *collegium* of the Lares, imperial slaves and freedmen, and the *conductores* of the *regio Hipponensis*.<sup>343</sup> This reveals the existence of an honorific practice tied to imperial properties beside those more widely attested and associated

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city territories. Mackensen 1993: 483 treats *fundus* as private and *saltus* as imperial, while Kehoe 1988 lists several *fundus* as imperial. The inscription from Henchir Mettich (*CIL* 8.25943) that bears testimony to Mancian leasing agreements on imperial estates uses both *saltus* and *fundus* for the *Neronianus* estate.

<sup>341</sup> Kehoe 2007: 57 suggests the *lex Manciana* originated on private estates and was adapted to state use. There is however no evidence for this, and the Hr Mettich text (*CIL* 8.25943, Trajan) is the earliest attested mention of the system. The Albertini Tablets, the only evidence for its application on a private property, date to a time when Africa was no longer part of the Roman Empire. On the subregions of Byzacena and their relative frequency of imperial estates, see chapter I pp. 54-6; M'Charek 1999: 167-178. Two examples are *Saltus Massipiani* in the *Gamuta* and *Fundus Iubaltianenses* in the *Gamonía*. *Masclianae* appears to have been an imperial property, as an imperial freedman and procurator built there (*AE* 2007.1712).

<sup>342</sup> *CIL* 8.26416 (Aïn Wassel) which mentions four *saltus* close to *Thysdrus*; the *Blandianus*, *Udens*, *Lamianus* and *Domitianus*. An indication of imperial ownership is the toponym *Vicus Augusti* by Sidi el Hani, an area with several important economic sites, as well as a level of monumentalization unusual for the inland of the Sahel. Ben Baaziz 1999: 34.

<sup>343</sup> See chapter II nn. 205, 227. *ILAlg.* 1.3992. However, a base from *Calama* (*CIL* 8.5351) raised by the townsfolk hails him as *municipis*. Compare *Q Acilius Fuscus*, procurator of the *annona* of Ostia, honored at *Thubursicu Bure* (*CIL* 8.1439) as a private man and citizen, but at Ostia (*CIL* 14.154) by guilds of grain workers.

with municipal honors or client-patron relations. Three further statues in the sample honor men in similar posts in their official role, two to the same man at *Theveste* raised by the cities *Oea* (Tripoli) and *Sabratha* (Sabratah), and another found at Ksibat near *Hadrumentum* raised by imperial freedmen and slaves. The post held by both men is the same, the procuratorship of the patrimonium of *Lepcis Magna* and *regio Tripolitana*, and the texts praise them for their conduct in office, not as private men. They are praised for their *innocentia* and *iustitia*, which according to the study by Moïra Crété on the separate vocabularies used in honorifics for virtues displayed by private men, imperial and local officeholders, places them in the imperial category.<sup>344</sup> The emphasis on official duties suggests that these procurators can be seen as representing the emperor.<sup>345</sup> Another interesting example that may suggest that *res privata* officials had a public role in local communities is a fragmentary text recording that a temple to Concord was raised at *Madauros* at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. by a procurator of the *regio Leptiminensis* and *tractus Biz...* (taken as referring to Byzacena), a rather celebratory item with the governor and legate performing the dedication. If the builder was acting as an official in the *res privata* and not as an magistrate of *Madauros*, it represents a drastic extension of the honorific role of such officials.<sup>346</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> Crété 2010: 203-211; see below p. 175 for a more thorough discussion. *Theveste* (CIL 8.16542a-b):... *ob insignem eius* | [*innoce*]nti[am]; Ksibat (CIL 8.11105): ...*omniu omnium virtutum* | [*et t*]otius *iustitia*[e]. Christol 2008 has argued for the official to be active from mid- to late 3rd c. Zwally 2003 claims procurators and *conductores* were public officials.

<sup>345</sup> E.g. procurators of *tractus Karthaginensis*, honored with their families as citizens: *Pheradi Maius*: AE 2003.1933; *Bulla Regia*: AE 1911.7, *ILTun.* 1248, fragmentary at *Thisiduo*: CIL 1269; construction for flaminiate, with his wife, at *Musti*: CIL 8.1578; *Thugga*, former advocate of the fisc of the patrimonium of Carthage, long since advanced to higher posts: CIL 8.26582; procurators of *regio Hadrumentina*: *Segermes*: CIL 8.11174; *Sufetula*: CIL 8.11341.

<sup>346</sup> *ILAlg.* 1.2035, usually dated to Aurelian. Christol 2008 connects the *curatela* with *Thysdrus*, placed under the *res privata*. At *Simitthus* (AE 1994.1885), an imperial freedman and procurator of Numidian marbles builds, but the location is closely tied to the fisc, and its honorific landscape is different from that of other African towns.

For the most part, however, inscriptions that feature men in such positions honor them as private men and citizens, within the framework of municipal honorific practices, and often post term. They represent not the state, but themselves as elite individuals, and the relations that the texts bear witness to are those between private man and town, or between client and patron. Officials tied to imperial properties are not featured as dedicators of imperial statues, nor do they in any other sense betray particularly close ties to the emperor. This to my mind goes for the *vici* on imperial land as well. Imperial cult has been argued to have played a major role in this context, but in fact, the objects raised are the same as those of any town: temples and imperial statues.<sup>347</sup> Expressions that accompany imperial dedications are no more heartfelt on estates than in towns, nor do the emperors themselves appear in the role of patrons or articulate their position as owner.<sup>348</sup> Yet it is not impossible that a *conductor* or even a *colonus* had fewer steps up the social ladder to the emperor than a *flamen* in a small town, by virtue of being part of the same organization. In any case, it pays to remember the extent to which communities on the many estates in the area depended directly on the emperor – and vice versa.

Nor were the emperors indifferent to the built landscape in the municipalities, or to how it was inscribed, as can be seen in some legislative measures. The right to add one's name to a structure as well as the sum spent were carefully regulated by laws, some of which are preserved in the Digest, book 50.10. If the project of a private man was not owed to the city, the builder

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<sup>347</sup> Stone 2008 sees imperial statues on estates as imperial cult, initiated by the tenants. Dossey 2010: 108 argued that only temples were built on estates, and that this is evidence of restrictions on what to build. However, the same epigraphic situation obtains in the towns, and should not lead us to assume that no other public structures were raised in the *vici*. The *coloni* at the *Fundus Ver...* raised a nymphaeum (*CIL* 8.11735), and the estate *vicus* at Sidi Marzouk Tounsi sported an arch. Bejaoui, Ben Lazreg and Peacock 1990: 66ff. See chapter V p. 240-1 n. 565.

<sup>348</sup> The one exception is Vibia Sabina in the role of patroness at *Calama*; *CIL* 8.5328.

may inscribe it (50.10.2); if you embellish the building of another, the original builder's name must be preserved (50.10.7.1); only the names of the builder and the emperor may be inscribed (50.10.3.2), and not even that of the governor (50.10.4). That the state was concerned with who took credit for a structure is clear, showing how important it was to maintain the power balance, both horizontally between locals and vertically between the emperor and his subordinates. To what extent imperial approval was required for erecting public works in provincial towns is a subject of debate, the main evidence being the letter exchange between Trajan and Pliny when the latter served in Bithynia, together with two rulings in the Digest. Private individuals could build without the permission of the emperor (50.10.3), but at least in theory, all public works raised by a town required imperial authorization (50.10.3.1). Thus, the option for the emperor so inclined to exercise direct control existed, but this power was likely for the most part not applied in any systematic fashion.<sup>349</sup> As with milestones and their inscriptions, some emperors appear to have assumed a more involved stance, while others did not. There were limitations to what private individuals could build: circuses, amphitheatres and theatres required the permission of the emperor, as did projects that could foment sedition (I would assume, much the same edifices) as well as such projects as were raised "to compete with other towns" – which in essence would have involved almost all the projects by local magistrates treated in the previous chapter. This strengthens the arguments of those who claim that the state saw this activity with alarm, and sought to limit it.<sup>350</sup> Funds intended for the upkeep of towns became channeled into ornamental

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<sup>349</sup> Burton 2004: 335-6 argues that in theory, the state had full authority over all administrative affairs of the provincial cities, including construction, but found it impossible to enact it due to poor "infrastructural reach."

<sup>350</sup> See chapter II pp. 115. Limitations to what private individuals were allowed to build are listed in 50.10.3.

projects, while much else was neglected, reflected in the ruling by Pius to favor restorations over construction *ex novo* (50.10.7). It is clear that what became built was not what central authorities perceived as needed, and that resources were seen to go to waste. State concern with city funds is also evident in a law intended to protect public land from exploitation by private individuals, at least not without rent accruing to the *respublica* (50.10.5.1). Many of these laws seem to have been ignored, or in any case, ways were found around them, seeing both what was built (or at least, inscribed) and the many names that did make it into the inscriptions.<sup>351</sup>

The governors, charged with supervising public construction in their provinces, likely reviewed and authorized construction projects as a matter of routine, a task that the proconsul of Africa is at times attested as conducting. How minute such involvement could be may be seen in an inscription from *Vazi Sarra* (Bez) in Byzacena, describing how the town had secured the authorization of the proconsul to be allowed to move a statue of a god (or more likely of Septimius Severus, as the god in question was on horseback), even though it was manufactured with funds privately raised, and en route to a temple built by a private man, a certain *Opstorius*.<sup>352</sup> A similar instance was quoted in the previous chapter, where a *flamen* obtained permission from Commodus to build a basilica instead of putting on promised games.<sup>353</sup> This should warn us against seeing imperial authorities as all that unintrusive during the high empire.

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<sup>351</sup> On the repeated attempts by central government to keep city finances safe from abuse by their leading strata, Burton 2004 and Bransbourg 2008; see chapter II p. 108, nn. 262-3.

<sup>352</sup> *CIL* 8.11999. The inscription is dated to Septimius Severus on the grounds of later efforts in the same town by the same man. According to another inscription from 173 (*CIL* 8.26249) a temple restoration by the *pagus* of *Uchi Maius* received authorization from the proconsul after what appears to be an application by a procurator.

<sup>353</sup> See chapter II pp. 113-4.

If emperors do not appear to have used the medium of building inscriptions much in person, they had means to regulate, control, and manipulate it.

*Dedicatory formulas and statues: the visible emperor*

Yet the image and name of the emperor were common sights in the African towns, and not the least so in building inscriptions. There are two means through which the emperor was visible in epigraphy: dedicatory formulas in building inscriptions, and statues of emperors. To begin with the former, the widespread practice of including a dedication to an emperor in a building inscription is what makes many of them easy to date. The most thorough examination of these dedications is that of Saastamoinen, who has termed them “starting formulas.” They follow rather set conventions, the vast majority beginning with *pro salute* followed by the emperor or emperors in the genitive. This dedication of a temple by the community of Roman citizens at *Alma* in the outskirts of Carthage may serve as an example:

*Frugifero Aug(usto) sacrum. | Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M. Aureli An|tonini Aug(usti) Armeniaci Medici Par|thici maximi et Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) L. Aureli | Veri Aug(usti) Armeniaci Medici Par|thici maximi cives Romani Al|menses aedem et porticus s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecerunt) | L. Volussenio Pastore et C. Iulio Rogato | curatoribus.*<sup>354</sup>

The temple was dedicated to Frugifer, not to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, but the text includes a dedication to the *salus* of the two emperors. This “salutary formula” has been traced by Jason Moralee to pre-Roman times in the Near East, associated with Hellenistic monarchs. It

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<sup>354</sup> *AE* 1974.690: “Consecrated to Frugifer Augustus. For the health of Emperor Caesar M. Aurelius Antoninus Augustus, greatest conqueror of Armenia, Media and Parthia, and Emperor Caesar L. Aurelius Verus Augustus, greatest conqueror of Armenia, Media and Parthia, the Roman citizens of *Alma* raised a sanctuary with portico out of their own money. *L. Volussenius Pator* and *C. Iulius Rogatus* curated.”

also continued to be in use long after the empire fell.<sup>355</sup> This strong tradition was lacking in Africa, where starting formulas initially appeared mainly in inscriptions like the above example, associated with high-profile building projects by towns. By the time of Septimius Severus, the usage has spread to include private agents as well as civic, and all categories of buildings. They are not dedicated directly to the emperor – such structures usually featured the name of the emperor in the dative, as on this arch to Caracalla:

*[Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) M(arco) Aurelio Severo Antonino Pio Felici Aug(usto) Parth(ico) max(imo) Britann(ico) max(imo) pont(ifici) max(imo) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIII co(n)s(uli) III p(atri) p(atriciae) proco(n)s(uli) divi Septimi [Severi Pii] | [Arab(ici) Adiab(enici) Parth(ici) max(imi) Britann(ici) max(imi) filio Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) L(uci) Septi]m(i) [[Getae P(ii)]] Aug(usti) Britannici fratri divi M(arci) Antonini Pi]i Germ(anici) S[arm(atici)] | [nep]ot(i) divi Antonini Pii pron(epoti) divi Hadriani abnep(oti) divi] Traia[ni Parth(ici) et divi Nervae adn(epoti) et Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) ---]A[---] | [---] legem sacra[m ---] | [---]S Optato [---] et diaton[is et] | [---] exedr[is cum] statuis domini no[stri ---]SIAM[ || ...*<sup>356</sup>

A fragmentary inscription that includes a *pro salute* formula is thus likely something other than an imperial shrine or altar, but the division is not a clean one and there are several variations on the theme.<sup>357</sup> Few items other than arches are dedicated directly to the emperors, but certain

<sup>355</sup> Moralee 2004: 3-4, 11.

<sup>356</sup> *CIL* 8.1273, *Vallis*: “To Emperor Caesar M. Aurelius Severus Antoninus, pious and blest Augustus, greatest conqueror of Parthia, greatest conqueror of Britannia, pontifex maximus, 14 times tribune, thrice consul, father of the realm, proconsul, son of the deified Septimius Severus Pius, greatest conqueror of Arabia, Adiabene, Parthia and Britannia, brother of Emperor Caesar L. Septimius Geta Pius Augustus, conqueror of Britannia, grandson of the deified M. Antoninus Pius, conqueror of Germania and Sarmatia, great-grandson of the deified Antoninus Pius, great-great-grandson of the deified Hadrian, great-great-great-grandson of the deified Trajan conqueror of Parthia and the deified Nerva, and Emperor Caesar ... the divine ordinance ... *Optatus* ... with the bandstones... and exedras with statues of our lord ...”

<sup>357</sup> An example of a temple inscription with the dative formula is *CIL* 8.1574 (*Musti*, Marcus and Verus). These formulas create difficulties in distinguishing buildings from statue bases, which can use both versions. *Pro salute* formulas do not guarantee a building inscription; imperial

temples toe the line as they are dedicated to deities associated with emperors such as Sol or Fortuna Victrix, or to imperial virtues. I will henceforth refer to these items as “celebratory,” as they in many ways resemble imperial honorifics. Arches fall in the same category, essentially monumental statue bases. Not only towns raised them; in fact, more arches in the sample are built by private men than by cities, such as this Hadrianic example from *Capsa* (Gafsa).<sup>358</sup>

*[Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) divi Tr]aiani Parthic[i fil. divi Nervae nep(oti) Tr]aiano Hadriano Aug(usto) | [pont(ifici) max(imo) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XXI? co(n)]s(uli) III p(atri) p(atriciae) P. Aelius Papir[ia --- arcum a so]lo cum statua et quadriga ex | [HS --- (milibus) n(ummum) ob honore]m Ilviratus excepta [legitima summa item ex] HS X (milibus) n(ummum) ob honorem flamoni per[petui adiectis ampli]us HS XXXI IDC (milibus) n(ummum) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) fe[cit --- Pa?]cati P. Valeri Pri[sci proc]o(n)s(ulis) c(larissimi) v(iri) pa[tr]oni municipii ded(icavit).<sup>359</sup>*

There are no arches with which the emperor was himself involved. As in Rome, where arches were raised by the senate and people, they are all explicitly the works of locals, and they should not be seen as direct imperial statements. Starting formulas moreover appear on all manner of structures and are not associated with particularly “imperial” monuments. In similar fashion the epithet *Augustus* is commonly awarded to all deities, without any particular appeal to the emperor to be assumed; they represent entirely formulaic elements applied as a matter of routine.

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statues at *Madauros* apply them on 5 of 15 items. Both types of inscriptions often use affixed stone panels as the medium, and far from all building inscriptions mention the built structure. The ambiguity is the greatest for arches, many of which had inscriptions on panels.

<sup>358</sup> Of a total of 39 arches in the sample, 19 are raised by private men, 17 by towns, while the builders of 3 remain unknown.

<sup>359</sup> *CIL* 8.98: “To the Emperor and Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, son of the divine Trajan conqueror of Parthia, grandson of the deified Nerva, pontifex maximus, 21 times tribune, thrice consul, father of the realm, P. Aelius of the tribe Papiria raised, by the decree of the decurions, an arch from the ground with statues and chariot out of ... thousand sesterces to obtain the honor of *duumvir*, besides the stipulated sum of 10,000 sesterces adding a further 32,600 to obtain the honor of *flamen perpetuus*, and dedicated it ... of the proconsul P. Valerius Priscus proconsul, *clarissimus vir*, patron of the municipium.”



These formulas have figured in the discussion on imperial propaganda mentioned in the introduction, centered on initiative – should they be seen as commanded by emperors striving to make an imprint on provincial society, or as attempts by locals to catch the attention of the emperor? Waldherr, following Gros, saw in particular the arches as explicit symbols of Roman power and submission of the natives, willed from above.<sup>360</sup> As arguments in favor of an imperial “Repräsentationswillen” became increasingly unfashionable, the “monologue” was in large measure replaced by a “dialogue” – the initiative belonged to the locals, but employing words and images such as could be expected to be well received, and were consequently informed by imperial policy.<sup>361</sup> Emanuel Mayer placed more weight on the dedicator in shaping the imperial image, but still saw the dedications as a conversation between subject and emperor. In line with this latter view, starting formulas have been treated as loyalty statements used by locals to show enthusiasm for the emperor. That they should automatically be treated as a loyalty statement or evidence of imperial cult was rejected by Moralee, who, although he favors an exchange between subject and emperor, describes a more intimate relation. Initially adopted by Augustus as part of an imperial “salutary ideology” which framed the emperor as the guardian of the realm, the formula was actively promoted in the provinces with an aim to create consensus through participation. The dedicator does not affirm his loyalty (and thus his submission) to the ruler he prays for, but is directly engaged in safeguarding the empire, and in extension, himself.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>360</sup> Waldherr 1989: 77.

<sup>361</sup> So Kuhoff 2006: 2245, interpreting arches raised by private individuals as evidence of imperial self-representation, basing this on the mechanism of “dialogue.” Kuhoff has labored to identify a large number of structures as imperial which others – myself included – consider the works of locals.

<sup>362</sup> Moralee 2004: chapter 1 *passim*, esp. 18, 24-35.

At least for Africa, this is, I believe to give them too much credit for sincerity, and to ignore the tediously repetitive nature of the phenomenon. After examining the record not only of imperial dedications in building inscriptions but also statues to emperors, I have come to question both the “dialogue” and the “monologue” as models for the roles played by imperial honorifics in provincial towns. These dedications reflect a process that is at the same time simpler and more complex, a means both for the emperors and the locals who apply them to further their interests, if in less direct ways than usually stated. To begin with the builders, one should bear in mind the strictly local context for the vast majority of the inscriptions, highlighted in the previous chapter – they reflect a concern limited to the town itself and its immediate surroundings (at best, Carthage), and form part of the processes of obtaining local offices and becoming included in the Carthaginian gentry, an advancement that in no way was controlled by imperial authorities. This local significance obtains quite as much for celebratory structures – of 19 arches to emperors in my sample raised by private men, the majority are *ob honorem*, as in the Hadrianic example above.<sup>363</sup> Moralee also stresses the function of the dedications in defining the status of the dedicator, and that they were deeply tied to local processes, but he describes the dedication to the emperor as the primary goal, the status positioning as secondary, while I would reverse the two.<sup>364</sup> Imperial dedications appear, and disappear, with building epigraphy generally. It may be noted that locations that were quite closely connected to imperial authorities such as *Hippo Regius* did not apply them with more fervor than others, even though these would

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<sup>363</sup> Jouffroy lists 17 private arches in her sample for all Africa, 13 of them raised for office. Although several items in the study area are earlier, it appears to have been a favored item under Septimius Severus and Caracalla, perhaps connected to the then widespread municipalization. The majority of arches outside of the study area are Severan.

<sup>364</sup> Moralee 2004: 5-6, 47-8, 57.

be good places to demonstrate devotion to the emperor, had it been their purpose. Saastamoinen rejects that they had anything to do with the emperors, but treats the formulas as entirely routine applications of conventional phrases that were ornamental only, and I would agree.<sup>365</sup> However, though in large part devoid of content, they still had a function as game pieces in the competition between local elites, lending the builder imperial glamour while showing that he or she was up to date with epigraphic fashions. Perhaps it also reflected the successful outcome of an application process, where the permission to associate the structure with the emperor had been secured.

A similar situation obtains with imperial statues, which are often discussed as a dialogue between community and emperor. As such, they are seen as genuine expressions of enthusiasm and treated as an index of popularity, especially of Septimius Severus, for whose family the count is the highest.<sup>366</sup> However, a large number were raised as *munera* for offices, especially in the Northeast, where they are at all times the most numerous.<sup>367</sup> They include the same elements as building inscriptions, in an abbreviated format, often featuring the *cursus honorum* and family members of the person responsible. From *Sutunurca* come two examples from the reign of Pius:

*Divo Hadriano patri | Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) T(iti) Aeli Hadr(iani) Antonini | Aug(usti) Pii pontif(icis) max(imi) trib(unicia) | potest(ate) VIII co(n)s(ulis) IIII p(atris) p(atriciae) | Germanus Passi Germani f(ilius) | Sutunurc(ensis) ob honorem flam(onii) perp(etui) | Quintae f(iliae) suae ex HS IIII mil(ibus) legitim(am) | statuam divi Hadriani et L(uci) Aeli Caes(aris) adiectis a se HS |(milibus) DXXV n(ummum) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) s(ua) p(ecunia) f(ecit) et | gymnasium populo dedit.*<sup>368</sup>

<sup>365</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 55, 60.

<sup>366</sup> E.g. Polley 2007: 147, treating the many statues to Septimius Severus and family as tokens of enthusiasm for the emperor in reciprocation of his attention to the province.

<sup>367</sup> My database includes 35 statues by private men to emperors in the Northeast, 15 in the West, 5 in Byzacena. Of these at least half were raised for office, often associated with aedileships or duumvirates and thus representing a lower level of the *cursus* than temples or arches, which were predominantly built to obtain flaminates. This division of tasks appears systematic.

<sup>368</sup> *AE* 1942/43.98: “To the divinized Hadrian father of the Emperor Caesar T. Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius, pontifex maximus, 9 times tribune, 4 times consul, father of the realm,

*M(arco) Aelio Aurelio Caes(ari) co(n)s(uli) II designato III Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) T(iti) Aeli Hadr(iani) Antonini Aug(usti) Pii p(ontificis) m(aximi) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XXIII imp(eratoris) II co(n)s(ulis) IIII p(atris) p(atriciae) fil(io) L(ucius) Sempronius P[ae]tus(?) Nivis(?) ob honorem flamonis perpetui [---]ci fil(ii) sui HS III mil(ia) [l]eg(itimae) sum(mae) item [---].*<sup>369</sup>

The first narrates that a certain *Germanus* raised a statue of the deified Hadrian to obtain a flamine for his daughter Quinta, the second that a *Sempronius* did himself the same service by dedicating a statue to Marcus Aurelius as Caesar. As with starting formulas, the processes that produced these statues were defined by entirely local concerns, in initiative and execution as well as purpose. Like imperial flamines, they served to raise the profile of the family in the local context, and should not be seen as attempts to communicate one's sentiments to the emperor and obtain his special favor. Nor are they, clearly, evidence of directly imposed imperial propaganda.

However, while the emperors did not initiate them, this does not exclude that they had any interest or stake in them. Contemporary observers regarded the erection of imperial statues as willed or at least closely monitored by emperors; for instance, Cassius Dio describes the mass of statues raised to Plautianus as part of the reason behind his eventual downfall, and Herodian also emphasizes the role played by images in the power struggles at the turn of the 3rd c.<sup>370</sup> The fact that *damnatio memoriae* was often ordered – and carried out – makes it clear that visibility

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Germanus of Sutunurca son of Passus for the honor of the flamine of his daughter Quinta raised by the decree of the decurions a statue to the divinized Hadrian and of L. Aelius Caesar for the established sum of 4,000 sesterces, adding 525 sesterces of his own money and gave gymnastic games for the people.”

<sup>369</sup> AE 1992.1797: “To M. Aelius Aurelius Caesar, twice consul, designated for his third consulate, son of the Emperor Caesar T. Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Pius, pontifex maximus, 13 times tribune, twice imperator, four times consul, father of the realm, L. Sempronius Paetus Nivis (?) ... for the honor of the perpetual flamine ... of his son ... the established sum of 3,000 sesterces ... ”

<sup>370</sup> E.g. Dio Cassius, *Rom. hist. epit.* 76.14, 16; Herodian *Hist.* 1.14-15; 3.9.4; 4.8.1-2.

through honorifics mattered, even if not directly controlled. I can think of at least two ways in which an emperor might affect how he was presented through such dedications, without cost or even much effort on his part. One is to make changes to the imperial titulature, evident in particular during the joint reign of Septimius Severus and Caracalla (as plainly visible in the arch to Caracalla quoted above). Horster's chronological table of imperial building inscriptions shows how titles then balloon, only to deflate to early 2nd c. conventions directly after.<sup>371</sup> The changes are too global and sudden to be the spontaneous result of a long-term trend initiated from below, but must be seen as an emanating from central headquarters.<sup>372</sup> Another means for emperors to influence their visibility through dedications by locals is through access – that is, to grant all who wish to raise an imperial statue the permission to do so (including allowing statues to serve as *munera* qualifying for office). Proper imperial trappings with as full a set as possible of priesthoods, shrines and statues were key to the recognition as a town of consequence, and thus high on the wish list of the uppermost local elites eager to get ahead of the competition – it is no coincidence that it is in this context that the most excessive imperial titles are to be found. Seeing the prestige vested in associating oneself with the imperial image, exploiting peer competition by opening access would automatically result in a proliferation of statues.<sup>373</sup> A third means may be

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<sup>371</sup> Horster 2001: 76-98, table 3.1. An example of a long title can be found at *Giufi* (*AE* 2003.1986) where a dedication to Minerva consisting of 15 words is followed by 158 words for the imperial title. Saastamoinen 2008a: 122 compares two inscriptions, one Severan containing 137 words, 117 of which comprise the imperial title, and one Diocletianic, in which 4 emperors are presented in 11 words.

<sup>372</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 417. In 218-299, building inscriptions shrink from an average 61 words to 37, without any change in word count beyond the imperial title.

<sup>373</sup> It should be noted that statues to Septimius Severus and family are far more numerous than those of other emperors also in Latium, with which no such close relation as for Africa has been proposed. A quick count using the Clauss-Slaby site ([www.manfredclauss.de](http://www.manfredclauss.de)) gave 28 statue

to multiply the number of imperial personages available to receive honors, which would increase one's impact on the visual landscape of the towns; several of the many Severan statues in the sample are raised four by four, and their great number does not represent as many discrete instances of dedication. This latter manipulation of visibility can be attributed to several other administrations, including the Tetrarchy.

To conclude, what appears to be a conversation between two parts, the emperor and local elites, represents instead a platform used by both parties to serve their own ends, without direct interaction between them.<sup>374</sup> A sign of how little relevance the actual person of the honoree had for the dedicator comes from *Thuburnica*, where a *flamen perpetuus* raised a statue to the founder of the city, the general Marius, on the exact same pattern as an imperial statue, in order to promote his wife to *flaminica*.<sup>375</sup> It is clear that no benefit could be expected in return, as is the case with statues to *divi*, and I would argue, to living emperors as well.

### **III.2 Imperial representatives: legates, governors and *curatores rei publicae***

The few cases of construction by emperors in my area do not show any ambiguities in their role: the private man and benefactor is not in evidence, only the official. Furthermore, the spread of imperial honorifics was defined by local concerns, and is not evidence that the emperors were actively projecting an image of themselves to local populations (or that they were especially popular among them). The few inscriptions which present the government in the role of

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bases to him and 8 to Caracalla (1.6 resp. 1.3/year), 60% more than the closest competitors Pius, with 23 (1/year) and Gallienus with 14 (0.9/year). All others show a rate well below 1/year.

<sup>374</sup> This is also the situation described by Rives 1995: 61-3, both parties benefitting from the process, in consensus but not direct cooperation.

<sup>375</sup> *AE* 1951.81.

benefactor appear outside my area, and were aimed at securing the loyalty of troops – the civil population of the province was not the object of direct imperial attention, at least not as manifest through architecture. This low profile does not provide an adequate image of the actual impact of the imperial government on the towns and their public spaces, over which governors and their deputies held considerable authority. The next step is to scrutinize the visibility of these imperial officials, through whom emperors tended to execute their projects. Imperial representatives play a decisive role in the record dating to Diocletian, and it has proven necessary to understand how earlier officeholders behaved – if they built, and if so, how their activity was framed.

The officials here examined are the proconsuls and their deputies, the commander of the *III Augusta*, and finally *curatores rei publicae*, whose role is less well understood and is the subject of considerable discussion. The same duality of roles applies to these as to emperors – apart from officials they were also elite individuals striving to promote their families and careers. That many a senator had interests in the region is clear from countless literary testimonies, and a term in Africa would have provided the opportunity to further these, an end that may well have been served through euergetism in the form of public construction. When, as in the inscriptions above, governors and legates carry out building projects on behalf of emperors, the “imperial” nature of their activity, that is, tasks carried out on behalf of the state rather than for their own benefit, is beyond doubt, but it remains to examine the inscriptions that feature imperial officials on their own. The same ambiguity obtains when they are honored through statues – are they recognized as powerful aristocrats and benefactors or as government officials?<sup>376</sup> To distinguish between these two roles I have set out some criteria based on the conventions for elite building activity

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<sup>376</sup> The question is posed also by Saastamoinen 2008a: 58, in particular for the 1st c governors who are more visible than their 2nd c counterparts.

described in the previous chapter, and its imperial counterpart outlined above. I have considered an imperial magistrate to be featured in an inscription as an elite individual when the text gives detailed information about his personal career, when family members are mentioned, in most cases when he poses as patron to a community, and when the project or honor commemorated postdates his term. These are features that characterize epigraphy by private agents but are for the most part absent from imperial examples. Conversely, “imperial” inscriptions include none but the current office of the builder, do not mention members of his family, and do not as a rule mention any particular relationship between the official and the location in question. Imperial representatives who pose in tandem are usually featured in their official role rather than their private one, except when they are members of the same family, which is frequently the case with deputies serving under the proconsul. Furthermore, inscriptions raised by local agents tend to apply the longest and most elaborate imperial titles available, while their “imperial” counterparts are brief, including at most the epithets *pius felix invictus*, which become standard from ca 200 CE onward. The types of objects are also different, with temples and arches favored by private builders, infrastructure by imperial authorities. Most of these features do not suffice as criteria on their own, but in combination they provide a means to understand how, and in whose interest, the official in question was building or being honored. The two agendas – private or imperial - are by no means mutually exclusive, but I believe one can be identified as the predominant role in each case. It should be said at once that there is no great mass of items to be discussed, and fewer still that offer any insurmountable difficulties of interpretation.



### *The legati Augusti pro praetore*

The slimmest category is that of the commander of the *legio III Augusta*, a task separated from the proconsul and placed under a *legatus pro praetore* already by Caligula. The office involved duties far beyond those of a regular army commander, and eventually became transformed into a governorship in its own right.<sup>377</sup> By the time of Septimius Severus the post became the *legatus Numidiae*, later still the *praeses Numidiae*. He is sometimes entitled *legatus Africae*. As seen in the text from *Ammaedara* above dating to the reign of Hadrian (*AE* 1995.1652), the legate was closely associated with the emperor as builder, executing his works and providing workforce and expertise from the ranks. To the West of the study area, the legate of the *III Augusta* is very visible in building inscriptions, and almost all projects presented as by emperors were actually carried out by this their most trusted workhorse. An example is a twin temple to Aesculapius and Salus ostensibly built by Marcus, but accompanied by two inscriptions that give the legate in the nominative – it is likely his project more than the emperor's.<sup>378</sup> The commanders of the *III Augusta* are also attested as building on his own, with inscriptions on the same pattern as those of the emperor and clearly as officials.<sup>379</sup>

As private men, however, they are absent from the record. They were of high senatorial rank, and quite a few were consul designates. One might expect to see them in the role of benefactor or patron, but there is little to suggest this in any part of the study area. In fact, very few inscriptions feature them in any way. Two texts dating to Marcus mention legates as builders, one from the town *Uzappa* in Byzacena, another from *Ammaedara* on the border

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<sup>377</sup> Under Septimius Severus. See chapter I p. 46 n. 106.

<sup>378</sup> *CIL* 8.2579a-e, *Lambaesis*. The emperors are given in the nominative, as though building.

<sup>379</sup> As when ordering restorations at *Lambaesis*, *CIL* 8.2736 (166) and *CIL* 8.2752 (174-7).

between Africa Proconsularis and (what was to become) Numidia. The item from *Uzappa* is fragmentary but appears to conform with the “official” model: the title of the legate is brief and includes no information on his career or family, nor does it express any personal tie to the location.<sup>380</sup> By contrast, the text from *Ammaedara* displays just such a personal bond, and the text also details the career of the legate whose *cursus* fills most of the text.<sup>381</sup> The emphasis on the private person is obvious also in his role as patron of *Ammaedara*, and he has been suggested to hail from the town, thus displaying connections that ran deeper than for most legates.<sup>382</sup> The insistence on the locality is striking; the aqueduct is dedicated to the town itself, which is not a widespread practice.<sup>383</sup> Although the instance likely represents exploitation for private aims of an imperial project rather than private euergetism, he is clearly *presented* as though a benefactor in his own right. In this, the text is unique, the one case that can be made for a legate appearing in the role of builder to promote himself and his family, on the aristocratic pattern.

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<sup>380</sup> CIL 8.11928: [*Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) L(uci) Aureli Commodi Germ(anici) Sarmatici principis iu[ventutis] co(n)s(ulis) des(ignati)*] | [--- *C(aius) Me]mmius Fidus legatus pr[o] praetore provinciae Africae*. Several more instances of construction which follow the same general pattern are to be found in Numidia and are usually executed together with troops.

<sup>381</sup> AE 1988.1119: *Amm[aed]ar[ae] Aug(ustae) s[acrum] | C(aius) Postu[miu]s C(ai) f(ilius) Qui[r(ina)] | Afr[icanus] c(larissimus) v(ir)] | [I]l[li]r ca[pital(is)] tr[ib(unus)] leg(ionis) VII Gem(inae) q(uaestor) urb(anus) [ab ac]/[tis] senatus aedil(is) curul(is) p[r]aet(or) [urb(anus)] | [leg(atu)s] p[ro] pr(aetore) patronus col(oniae) aq[uae] ductum | [e] legi]bus praediorum iuris suscepit | [cum] | [rivo a]quae [q]uae permissu p[ro]co(n)s(ulis) fluit*.

<sup>382</sup> His tribus *Quirina* is that of the city, and his cognomen is *Africanus*, and the published argued for a local man. The reference to the *servitutes praediorum* has been interpreted as the project being due to his own private initiative and funding rather than imperial, although this remains unclear; Ben Abdallah 1988. The AE treats it as an act of euergetism, but the verb *suscepit* is not otherwise used for construction. Likely he undertook an imperial project, but his connection to the location occasioned a dedication with more flair than the norm. On the *servitutes*, Monier 1947: 432; Mayer-Maly 1999: 97 ff.

<sup>383</sup> Other instances in Africa are few: a dedication to *Agger* at the same city (Hr. Sidi Amara, AE 1991.1636), to Carthage at *Uchi Maius* (CIL 8.26239); dedications to Rome at *Thubursicu Bure* (CIL 8.1427) and *Madauros* (AE 1937.25).

Honorifics bring this point home further: there are no statues in my record to a serving *legatus*. Such few *legati* as appear – two in total – are honored in other capacities, long after their terms were served.<sup>384</sup> In general, thus, the legates of the *III Augusta* were seen to work closely with imperial government, and their efforts fall under “imperial” projects. Further to the west in Numidia their role was more pronounced – legates often appear as patrons, and officiate over dedication ceremonies. It appears that the legates were appointed as patrons to all major towns in Numidia in blanket fashion, without any indication that this entailed any expectations of actual benefactions, and the appointment probably represents no more than an honorary title.<sup>385</sup> It is used only when dedicating the construction of others, never when the legate himself builds, which remains an activity closely tied to the person of the emperor.

However, no such dedications are attested in the study area, even the part that belonged to Numidia until Diocletian. The different roles of imperial officials within and outside the area can be illustrated by the case of *Q. Anicius Faustus*, the general of Septimius Severus. He is one of

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<sup>384</sup> One example consists of two statues dedicated to *Sextus Caecilius Aemilianus*, one at *Thibiuca* (*AE* 1914.250) and another close by in the vicinity of *Thuburbo Minus* (Tebourba, *CIL* 8.1174). The legateship not his latest post. The second man is the same *Memmius Fidus Albius* who built at *Uzappa*. Four bases have been found: one raised by the city of *Bulla Regia* in honor of baths built by his daughter (*CIL* 8.25527), two more at *Bulla Regia* (*ILAfr.* 453, *AE* 1953.83), and at *Vina* (Mden, *CIL* 8.12442) by an *amicus*. All involve private roles only; the legateship is but a mid-career step and not the capacity for which he is honored. The titles used when honored as a private man are far more detailed compared to when building in imperial service; *CIL* 8.12442: *C(aio) Memmio C(ai) filio Quir(ina) | Fido Iulio Albio cons(uli) sodali | Titio leg(ato) Aug(usti) pro pr(aetore) prov(inciae) Noricae(!) cur(atori) | viae Flam(iniae) praef(ecto) Minic(iae) proco(n)s(uli) provin(ciae) | Baetic(ae) leg(ato) Aug(usti) leg(ionis) VII Claudiaie iuridico per | Italiam reg(ionis) Transpadanae praetori leg(ato) | pr(o) pr(aetore) prov(inciae) Afric(ae) aedil(is) ceriali q(uaestori) prov(inciae) | Asiae trib(un)o laticl(avio) leg(ionis) II Augustae | C(aius) Annius Iulius Secundus [[---]] | [[---]] | amico rarissimo ob eximiam eius er|ga se benevolentiam sua pec(unia) posuer(unt) et ded(erunt) | d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).*

<sup>385</sup> Some examples among many: *AE* 1985.875b; *CIL* 8.17852; *AE* 1985.881b, all at *Thamugadi*. The practice is common also in Tripolitania.

the most visible imperial officials in the epigraphic record outside of my region, carrying out imperial building projects (not as patron) and dedicating public structures (as patron). Within the study area, however, he is not attested in these roles at all, nor are any statues to him to be found, even though he in all probability resided there. It is clear that he and the family that rose with him had deep private interests in the region, seen in the traces they have left through honors to his son and wife, patrons through generations to small towns in Byzacena where the family held extensive properties, one of which is perhaps attested from border stones.<sup>386</sup>

### *The proconsuls and their deputies*

The roles of the proconsuls in terms of private and official are more ambiguous than those of the commander of the *III Augusta*, who is almost exclusively visible in his official role. They become increasingly enmeshed in African elite society toward the end of the 2nd c., and more than one is himself of African origin. *C. Septimius Severus*, under whose term the future emperor served as deputy, is the most famous example, but there are others as well, such as *C. Vettius Sabinianus*, proconsul under Commodus and honored as patron at *Uthina* before he held this

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<sup>386</sup> For the attribution of the estate that became *Civitas Faustianensis* to Q. Anicius Faustus, M'Charek 2003, using the toponym and border markers with the legend *Q. A. F.* His son *S. Anicius Faustus Paulinianus* at *Uzappa* (CIL 8.11933); his wife *Vesia Rustica* at *Cuttilula* (AE 1969/70.646b). There are no statues to Faustus himself, either as official or as private man. He was responsible for the Severan expansion to the south, where he appears as builder in his official capacity together with the army. An example from the camp at Si Aoun (ILAfr. 9): *Pro salute Imp(eratorum) nn(ostorum) / L(uci) Septimi Severi Pertinac(is) / et M(arci) Aureli Antonini Augg(ustorum) / et L(uci) Septimi [[Getae]] Caesaris / Q(uintus) Anicius Faustus co(n)s(ul) de(signatus) / praesidium poni iussit sub / cura Aemili Emeriti dec(urionis) al(ae) / praepositi coh(ortis) II Fl(aviae) Afr(orum) et n(umeri) col(lati).*

office.<sup>387</sup> The proconsuls appointed deputies who like the commanders of the legion were entitled *legati pro praetore*, and these two positions are sometimes difficult to tell apart. The common practice of appointing one's sons to the office helps to distinguish the two, and it also shows how official roles and family tactics could overlap.<sup>388</sup> Statues to serving proconsuls are quite numerous, in particular in the West and Byzacena where some of them honor him as patron.<sup>389</sup> This suggests that their private role was privileged over the official, although I would not consider this conclusive; as for the legates of Numidia, it may have been an honorary title that came with the office. That said, a sign that the proconsul did maintain relations to towns in the area as a private man is a base that was clearly raised to him as a private man, as it was awarded to him past his office and includes a lengthy *cursus*.<sup>390</sup> The record from the Northeast is less ambiguous: there are no statues to serving proconsuls or their legates attested within the *pertica*, but quite a few that honor members of their families, as patrons, at times through

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<sup>387</sup> AE 2004.1820; see monograph by Merlin 1919. A dedication at *Thubursicu Numidarum* (ILAlg. 1.1283) to a proconsul and patron may concern C. Septimius Severus, but the *Septimii* had their networks further east and are not much visible in the region here studied.

<sup>388</sup> The proconsul had at least two deputies of his own choosing, usually close relatives. Septimius Severus served under his kinsman during the reign of Marcus, Didius Iulianus under Salvius Iulianus, the jurist (see *ILTun.* 699). It is possible that both Memmius and Postumius (who dedicated the aqueduct to *Ammaedara*) were in fact proconsular legates, although the titles *legatus provinciae* and *legatus Africae* were usually associated with the commander. There are exceptions to the norm that *legatus eius* refers to proconsular deputies; C. *Macrinus Sossianus*, *legatus Numidiae* in 290-294, is sometimes entitled *legatus eius* in relation to the proconsul.

<sup>389</sup> Some examples: *Thubursicu Numidarum* (ILAlg. 1.1283) C.(?) *Septimius Severus*, as patron; *Bulla Regia* (AE 1971.490) anonymous twice proconsul, as patron; also *Bulla Regia* (AE 1971.490) Q. *Aradius Rufinus Optatus Aelianus* vice proconsul, fragmentary and unclear if patron; *Calama* (CIL 8.5355) anonymous proconsul under Hadrian, as patron; *Mactaris* (AE 1952.94) C. *Bruttius Praesens*, as patron; *Pupput* (CIL 8.24094) Salvius Iulianus, as patron; *Turris Tamalleni* (Telmin, CIL 8.84) S. *Cocceius Vibianus*, as patron.

<sup>390</sup> ILAfr. 43; L. *Catilius Severus Iulianus Claudius Reginus* at *Thysdrus*, not honored as patron.

generations.<sup>391</sup> At least in this part of the province, they and their families appear deeply involved in the local social fabric, and their official and private roles often merged.

In both roles one might expect the proconsuls to be involved with building projects. As officials, the provincial governors were responsible for the supervision and maintenance of public works.<sup>392</sup> The proconsul is featured in two of the works attested for emperors mentioned above, and west of the study area the governors are quite visible as builders, if always in the name of emperors. The ideal governor encouraged construction, at least according to the model presented by Tacitus.<sup>393</sup> As private men of the highest status, they had both the means and the motivation to build, and the rich African epigraphic record from Trajan onward should have produced at least a few examples. It thus comes as a surprise that there is barely any evidence at all of construction initiated by a proconsul – in either role – within the study area during the High

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<sup>391</sup> More such indirect honors to proconsuls appear toward the end of the 2nd c. E.g. *Municipium Aurelium Commodianum* (CIL 8.823) to son of a *nepos* of a deceased proconsul, as patron; *Bisica Lucana* (CIL 8.12291) to son of proconsul, as patron. The future proconsul Sabinianus at *Uthina* has already been mentioned, showing that the family was entrenched in the area and that the patronate did not come with the proconsulate. The families of proconsular legates receive similar honors, such as a dedication at *Simitthus* (ILTun. 1259) to *Papia Novella*, wife of a legate and patron (although possibly the commander). *C. Arrius Calpurnius Longinus*, suffect consul 238-244 and once *legatus Karthaginis*, was honored as patron at *Avioccala* (Sidi Amara, CIL 8.23831) where his mother was also patroness.

<sup>392</sup> The description by Ulpian (*Dig.* 1.16.7) is worth quoting in full: *Aedes sacras et opera publica circumire inspiciendi gratia, an sarta tectaque sint vel an aliqua refectione indigeant, et si qua coepta sunt ut consummentur, prout vires eius rei publicae permittunt, curare debet curatoresque operum diligentes sollemniter praeponere, ministeria quoque militaria, si opus fuerit, ad curatores adiuvandos dare.* “(The governor) should go on a tour to inspect sacred buildings and public works, to see if walls and roofs are intact and if any repairs are necessary, and see to it that any works commenced are finished, provided that the resources of the *respublica* allow. He ought to supervise and in the proper manner assign diligent managers for the works, and if need be also the assistance of military experts to aid them.”

<sup>393</sup> Tacitus *Agricola* 21.2.

Empire.<sup>394</sup> Before Diocletian, there is only one project in the entire sample, a portico (likely; the text is emended) at *Thuburbo Maius* raised by *C. Cingius Severus*, who served in 191-192:

*[Pro sal]ute [Imp(eratoris) Cae]s(aris) d[ivi M. A]nton[ini pii fili divi Pii nepotis divi Hadriani pronepotis divi Traiani Parth(ici) abnepotis d]ivi Nervae adne[potis L. Aeli A]urel[i Commodi pii felicitis] Aug(usti) Sar[m(atici)] Germ(anici) m[ax(im)i] Brit(annici)] pontif(icis) m[aximi] | [tribun(icia) potest(ate) XVI imp(eratoris) VIII co(n)s(ulis) VI patris patriae porticum? ---][[C. C[ingius Severus]]][proco(n)s(ul) cum L.? V]aleri[o Valeriano Paeto? le]gato su[o] dedit [idemq(ue) d]edicavi[t].<sup>395</sup>*

Cingius' name was later erased. He had been the one to call most vigorously for a *damnatio memoriae* of Commodus during the reign of Pertinax, as reported in the *Historia Augusta*; perhaps this led to his own disfavor under Septimius Severus, who reentered Commodus among the ranks of approved emperors and had his monuments reinscribed.<sup>396</sup> Cingius may also have overstepped in other ways, and I would suggest that this unique inscription can be used to argue that he did. The near complete absence of proconsular building activity from the entire period leading up to Diocletian is striking: one would at the very least expect an indication of the type of "silent" construction treated in the previous chapter and associated with members of the Carthaginian gentry. These, as we have seen, are mainly identified through statue bases, but no base honoring a proconsul or legate mentions any activity of this kind, even though the role of

<sup>394</sup> There are however construction projects by governors of other provinces, e.g., a late 2nd c. proconsul of Sicily, apparently an African, as per *CIL* 8.954 (Bled Djedida).

<sup>395</sup> *ILAfr.* 265: "For the health of the Emperor Caesar, son of the divinized M. Antoninus Pius, grandson of the divinized Hadrian, great-grandson of the divinized Trajan conqueror of Parthia, great-great-grandson of the divinized Nerva, L. Aelius Aurelius Commodus, pious and blessed Augustus, greatest conqueror of Sarmatia, Germania and Britannia, pontifex maximus, 16 times tribune, 8 times imperator, 6 times consul, father of the realm, C. Cingius Severus proconsul and his legate L. Valerius Paetus donated and dedicated the portico."

<sup>396</sup> *SHA Commodus* 20.2-5. The *damnatio* and restoration of Commodus is in plentiful evidence in African epigraphy (if not in this particular text, in which his name was never erased), e.g., *AE* 1922.53, reinscribed under *Q. Anicius Faustus*.

patron is usually assumed to have come with some expectations of generosity.<sup>397</sup> Granted, there are not nearly as many statues to proconsuls as to local elite individuals, and the lacuna may be accidental. But the silence on the whole seems artificial, and the question arises whether construction by governors in their own name was suppressed from above. This would strengthen the view that their access to self-representation was circumscribed during the principate, for fear of their creating strong loyalty bases which might put the locals in doubt as to who was in charge.<sup>398</sup> This was an especially fraught issue in provinces with legions – the classic example is the (apparently non-effective) ban on governors of local origin by Marcus in the wake of the revolt by Cassius. Africa Proconsularis was a *provincia inermis*, but of crucial importance in other ways, and a proconsul who built strong personal networks there may have been viewed with suspicion. The fact that Cingius was subject to a *damnatio memoriae* is suggestive, and one may note the use of the verb *dedit*, underlining the euergetic nature of the act. I would not go so far as to argue that acting as benefactor through construction was enough to cause his fall from grace, but it does suggest that he harbored ambitions that may have caused alarm.

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<sup>397</sup> An undated statue at *Sufetula* (CIL 8.235) to a *proconsul rei publicae Romae* mentions his *pietas* and *oboedientia*, expressions which are usually associated with money donations, but it mentions no structures, nor is it clear what post he actually held when honored.

<sup>398</sup> The Late Antique governor had a pronounced role in construction, as seen both in building inscriptions from Julian onward and in book 15 of the Theodosian Code. One entry states that governors should build if needed (15.1.18), restore rather than build anew (15.1.15), and ask the emperor first (15.1.37). Constantine asks not to be spared the trivial and only be consulted for completed restoration projects of some significance (15.1.2). The rulings frame the governor as active as builder, even eager, and have at times been retrojected to the principate, but there is little in them that resembles the situation seen in this area before Diocletian. A sign that this role was established by then is the inclusion of *τὸ πόλεις ἐγείρειν*, “to raise up cities,” among the tasks of the governor described Menander Rhetor (416.10). However, a late law condemns inscribing the governor’s name without the emperor’s as treason (15.1.31). Horster 2001: 1978-8 argues that a similar law existed earlier, seeing the paucity of governors in building epigraphy.



There is one element of the building process as presented in inscriptions with which the proconsuls could be associated, and which shows that the opportunity to be seen in this context could be grasped when offered: the practice of dedicating the work of others, attested in 9 pre-Diocletianic inscriptions. The builder is usually a town, more rarely a private man.<sup>399</sup> A typical example comes from *Avita Bibba*, where what is likely an arch was erected in 159 CE by the *municipium*, but dedicated by the proconsul *Marcus Acilius Egrilius Plarianus Larcius Lepidus Flavius Priscus* and his legate *Quintus Egrilius Plarianus*, clearly a relative:

*[Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) divi Hadria]ni fil. divi Traiani Parth[ici nep(oti) divi Nervae] pronep(oti) T. Aelio Hadriano [Antonino Aug(usto) Pio] | [pont(ifici) max(im)o trib(unicia) pot(estate) XXII] co(n)s(uli) IIII p(atri) p(atriciae) et M. Aelio Aurelio Caes(ari) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIII c[o(n)s(uli) II totique domui eo]rum gentique municipium Aelium Avitta [Bibba d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)] | [dedicantib(us) M. Acilio] Egrilio Plariano La[rcio Lepido Flavio Prisco?] proco(n)s(ule) et Q. Egrilio Plariano leg(ato) pr(o) [pr(aetore)].<sup>400</sup>*

Similar examples can be mentioned for *Thuburbo Maius*, where *Salvius Iulianus* and his legate, the future emperor *Didius Iulianus*, dedicated a Capitolium raised by the city in 168-169, and also from *Musti*, *Thugga*, and *Mactaris*.<sup>401</sup> The practice is usually described as a win-win situation for the parties involved: the town got to associate itself with the proconsul, who in turn

<sup>399</sup> A proconsul and legate, both patrons, dedicated an item at *Lepcis Magna* (CIL 8.22671c) raised by a private man during the reign of Vespasian. The only example from the study area in which the builder is not a town is the Tiberian bridge at *Vaga*; see above p. 133.

<sup>400</sup> CIL 8.800: “To the emperor Caesar son of the divinized Hadrian grandson of the divinized Trajan conqueror of Parthia T. Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Augustus Pius, pontifex maximus, 22 times tribune, 4 times consul, father of the realm, and M. Aelius Aurelius Caesar, 13 times tribune, twice consul, and all their house and kin, the municipality of *Avita Bibba* by the decree of the decurions and with public money. M. Acilius Egrilius Plarianus Larcius Lepidus Flavius Priscus proconsul and the legate Q. Egrilius Plarianus dedicated.”

<sup>401</sup> *Thuburbo Maius*: *ILTun.* 699; *Musti*: CIL 8.1582, undated, object unknown; *Thugga*: CIL 8.1480, aqueduct raised by the city under Commodus; *Mactaris*: CIL 8.11799, likely an arch, broadcast with three inscriptions dating to Marcus.

received some visibility. The initiative was likely the town's, although little is known about the process. The objects tend to be of the grander kind such as Capitolia, and thus more than usual a matter of pride for the community; having a proconsul oversee the ceremonials would have added solemnity to the proceedings. But what manner of glamour were they reaching for – the presence of an imperial official, or the favor of one of the wealthiest families in the empire? And in what capacity do the proconsuls answer the call? Most of the dedication formulas are succinct, suggesting nothing beyond the call of duty. There are however exceptions that lead to doubts. One such is a cache of dedication inscriptions from the reign of Trajan which relate how the proconsul *C. Pomponius Rufus Acilius --- Coelius Sparsus* (one of his names is lost) dedicated a Capitolum at *Thubursicu Numidarum* in the company of his sons, serving as his deputy *legati*:

*[Iunoni Regi]nae [sacrum]. | [Pro salute Imp(eratoris) Nerv]ae T[raiani Ca]esaris  
 Au[g(usti) Germ(anici) Dac(ici) optimi] | [pontif(icis) max(im)i trib(uniciae) potestat(is)]  
 XVII imp(eratoris) [VI co(n)s(ulis) VI p(atris) p(atriciae)] | [C. Pomponius -f. Rufus Acilius  
 ---]u[---]us Coelius Sparsus pon[it(ifex) sodalis Flavialis proco(n)s(ul)] | [cum Q.  
 Pomponio Marcello f. leg(ato)] pro [pr(aetore) co(n)s(ule) d]esig(nato) sodal[e] Titio et  
 C. Pompo[nio P---f. leg(ato) pro pr(aetore) dedic(avit)]. | D(ecreto) d(ecurionum)  
 p(ecunia) p(ublica).<sup>402</sup>*

In this case, the dedication formula has swelled out so as to take over the greater part of the inscription. Strictly speaking, this is not Sparsus' project. It is paid for by the community and the proconsul only dedicates the structure. Yet this is very much a private ostentation. Several family

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<sup>402</sup> *ILAlg.* 1.1230: "Consecrated to Iuno Regina. For the health of the Emperor Nerva Trajan Caesar Augustus, the supreme conqueror of Germania and Dacia, pontifex maximus, 17 times tribune, 6 times consul, 6 times father of the realm, C. Pomponius ... son ... Rufus Acilius ... Coelius Sparsus, pontifex, Flavial priest, proconsul, dedicated (the temple) together with Q. Pomponius Marcellus his son and legate, consul designate, designated to the Titian priesthood, and C. Pomponius ... his son and legate. By the decree of the decurions, with public money." An identical inscription dedicated to Minerva has been found (*ILAlg.* 1.1231). Also *ILAlg.* 1.1232, although too fragmentary to supply much information. For Sparsus, see Christol 2011 for an inscription that perhaps gives his full name; also Thomasson 1996: 51-52.

members are mentioned including elements of their *cursus*, which definitely do not belong to the “imperial” type of inscription. That Sparsus had a special relation to the town is suggested by the fact that he had dedicated there before, together with his wife *Bassilia*.<sup>403</sup> His case may be exceptional, and one suspects that Sparsus himself had some influence over the wording, but it serves to illustrate that proconsuls could and did use dedications as an opportunity to promote their families, in ways that they did not use construction in their own names. Being featured as dedicator in an inscription offered an opportunity to appear as benefactors, an opportunity not, it appears, otherwise available. The practice of proconsular dedication is mainly attested during the period of the late Antonines and comes to an abrupt end with the accession of Septimius Severus, with not a single item attested in this the largest subsample. Suppression from above has been suggested (although the ruling against including the name of the governor in building inscriptions dates to the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c.), and if true, this further testifies to the unease with which emperors saw governors eager to create personal relationships with the populations in their assigned territories.<sup>404</sup> Be that as it may, the exact same chronology applies to statues honoring proconsuls, which peak in the record under Marcus and Commodus but disappear entirely with Septimius Severus, as patrons or otherwise. Proconsuls as dedicators reappear from the reign of Gallienus, but statues to proconsuls do not until the very end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> *ILAlg.* 1.1282. It has been argued that Sparsus hails from *Thubursicu Numidarum*, which is possible but by no means proven through these inscriptions.

<sup>404</sup> Marcus prohibited the election of governors of local descent after the attempt of Avidius Cassius in Syria; Dio Cassius, *Rom. hist. epit.* 72.31.1.

<sup>405</sup> *ILAfr.* 506 (*Thubursicu Bure*) features a proconsul and son dedicating, unusually both as patrons. The one potential statue to a governor is a base from the same town to *Sextus Cocceius Anicius Faustus Paulinus*, proconsul either in the 260’s or under Diocletian, the earlier date the likelier. The only two appearances of proconsuls in honorific roles from Commodus to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. thus coincide well in time and space.

### Curatores rei publicae and the 3rd century

The reign of Septimius Severus also marks the arrival of the final and most elusive category of imperial officials, the *curatores rei publicae*. They are the most visible of the three, and alone in appearing with some frequency in connection with construction. The office had existed at least since Trajan and was probably older still, but is not attested in Africa until a century later.<sup>406</sup>

Their task, judging by the Trajanic examples, was to manage the finances of towns in need of assistance, an emergency measure only applied in extraordinary situations. An inscription from *Tepelte* (Blaiet) praises the curator for managing *negotia* and other public matters, suggesting these duties applied in Africa as well.<sup>407</sup> However, at least in Africa they also appear in a range of other roles, and I will suggest that their arrival did not represent a temporary emergency measure but a permanent addition to the provincial administration. Although there is much discussion on what their presence signified, there is general consensus that the curators were “imperial,” directly appointed by the emperors and serving their ends. This close tie to the emperor is made explicit in an (undated) example from *Thysdrus*, stating that *Annius Rufinus* curated the city *ex indulgentia principis*, “due to the generosity of the emperor.”<sup>408</sup> The curators ranked above the highest magistrates of the towns to which they were assigned, which is usually described as a serious encroachment on civic autonomy; a means for central government to assume more direct control over local communities and thus a critical step toward monarchy. A

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<sup>406</sup> *ILS* 1017 from Pisidian Antioch displays a *cursus honorum* that includes the curatorship of colonies and municipalities and dates to Domitian, according to Griffin 2000: 58-59. Standard works on curators include Liebenam 1897; Mancini 1906; Lucas 1940; Camodeca 1980; Jacques 1983. Also Lepelley 1979: 168-193 Gascou 1972: 60 gives the timeline of their introduction.

<sup>407</sup> *CIL* 8.12253, undated but likely late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. For the full text, see below n. 432.

<sup>408</sup> *CIL* 8.51. It is usually assumed to date to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. due to its flowery language and the fact that *Thysdrus* is not attested as colony until the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. The *Tepelte* item also mentions the appointment, but *imperatore* is emended and thus not certain.

contrasting narrative casts the office as a more benign affair, an instance of “central service” aimed at supporting towns in need.<sup>409</sup> But even the defenders of a more “hands-off” ruling style see the curatorship as a tool aiding centralization, if prompted less by an active will to interfere than by occasion.<sup>410</sup> Regardless of perspective, most observers treat their activities without further consideration as representing imperial policy. However, there is, I believe, reason to question that their activities should always be branded as “imperial.” As I examined their visibility in the region, I found the situation to be far more complex; in fact, the role of the *curatores rei publicae* toward local communities in Africa was even more ambiguous than that of the proconsuls. It is also far from clear that their presence was resented by the locals, who may well have seen it as prestigious to sport their own, and perhaps even petitioned to have one. As we shall see, their actions could often be beneficial to the towns in their care. Furthermore, to local elites, the post came to represent another coveted step in the *cursus*, a position that trumped almost any other available to them.

33 curators have been identified in my sample before Diocletian, of whom five can be dated to 198-230, five to 260-284, plus a small number tentatively referred to either period. It seems thus that they are fairly evenly spread over the period. The majority are however not well dated, and suggestions as to their chronology often differ dramatically. It is at times argued that

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<sup>409</sup> Lucas 1940: 56; Lepelley 1999b: 242 argued that the system was to be preferred over brutal requisition, which was the norm earlier, and that the towns kept their jurisdiction (1979: 162). Porena 2006: 11-12 also strives to tone down interference, remarking that no local funds went to the fisc but were all locally. For the traditional view, Bury 1923. Gascou 1972: 60-61 called it an attack on municipal autonomy, but a necessary one. He explains the late introduction in Africa with that these provinces being in better shape than others. Griffin 2000 calls the development of the office under Trajan an instance of “imperial paternalism,” a view midway between the two.

<sup>410</sup> Such as Lucas himself who speaks of encroachment, impingement and interference, seen as a negative for the towns and their ruling strata. Lucas 1940: 74.

the office changed in nature during the course of the century, from an honorific post awarded to prominent Carthaginians, and mainly involving towns in the Northeast, to one assigned to cities throughout the region and which deeply affected local administration. This is based mainly on the differing contexts through which the early and late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. curators are known, from honorifics in the earlier cases, the later more often from building inscriptions. Honorific practices, always stronger in the Northeast, fizzled out over time, which skews the image of the office. Such few well dated items as exist in fact betray little in the way of change; the earliest two items mirror exactly the two latest, both representing imperial statues raised by curators on behalf of their towns. The distribution appears to have covered the entire area from the start; early texts attesting to curators include both *Limisa* and *Sufetula* in Byzacena, and two examples from *Mactaris* and *Bulla Regia* are also likely Severan.<sup>411</sup> Most major towns have 3<sup>rd</sup> c. curators attested, and a number of inscriptions reveal a situation where the same magistrate manages all towns in a limited area, such as a curator of *Thysdrus*, *Thaenae* and *Bararus*, all towns in the southern part of the Sahel, or another assigned to *Hippo Regius*, *Calama*, *Thubursicum Numidarum* and *Tipasa*, that is, all the major cities in the Northwest.<sup>412</sup> The appointments could thus be regional, with a curator assigned to an entire subdistrict of the provincial administration. “Multiple” curatorships are attested both among late and early instances, suggesting a more

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<sup>411</sup> Severan items attested at *Sufetula* (*ILAfr.* .130-1) and *Limisa* (*CIL* 8.12032) in Byzacena, and *Aptucca* (*CIL* 8.15496), *Furnos Minus* (*CIL* 8.25808c) and *Thugga* (*CIL* 8.26577a-c) in the Northeast. To these may be added probable items from *Thuburbo Minus* (*ILAfr.* 414, Northeast), *Mactaris* (*CIL* 8.23601, Byzacena) and *Bulla Regia* (AE 1962.184b). Late items include *Thugga* (*CIL* 8.10620) and Carthage (*CIL* 8.12522) in the Northeast, *Calama* (*CIL* 08. 5332) in the West, and *Pupput* (*CIL* 8.24095) and *Capsa* (*CIL* 8.100) in Byzacena.

<sup>412</sup> *ILAfr.* 44; AE 1955.149. They may well be early; nothing in the formulas point to a late date. Jacques dated a curator of *Mactaris* (*CIL* 8.23601) and *Zama Regia* to Septimius Severus, while a curator of *Capsa* and *Tacape* (*CIL* 8.100) dates to Probus.

systematic application from the outset than one based on emergency measures. A map of locations where curators have been attested features many important towns entirely missing from building epigraphy, including several ports, and gives a far more accurate sense of the relative importance of African towns.<sup>413</sup> Though loose, the grid seems to account for all parts of the province, with curators established in the major regional centers. It is not unlikely that it was a point of pride for a town to be the seat of a curator. That the grid appears more dense in the Northeast may be due to the greater influence of these towns on the provincial administration at Carthage, making it easier to secure their own curator and thus come across as towns of note. It may also be due to the more vivid honorific practices in the area.

Socially, they belong to the highest elite stratum of the province, most of them senators along with a few high ranking equestrians, with a strong showing of Carthaginians in the Northeast. In the West and Byzacena, the posts were often assigned to very high-ranking non-Africans, among them a consul and several senators.<sup>414</sup> That the emperors appointed them is, I believe, open to doubt; it seems more likely that this task was carried out by the proconsul, whose networks the appointments seem to reflect. The curator from *Thysdrus* is unique in stating the part played by the emperor, which rather suggests that this was extraordinary and not routine. If so, the office represents another sphere where an emperor so inclined had the option to exert direct control, while most would have simply affirmed appointments made locally. Whether the system was applied in every province is hard to tell due to the lack of comparable data from most

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<sup>413</sup> Several of the otherwise silent ports are featured among them such as *Utica*, *Pupput*, *Hippo Regius*, *Tacape*, and Carthage itself. The same goes for major inland towns which have produced little or no building epigraphy, such as *Thysdrus*, *Capsa*, and *Sicca Veneria* (as many as 3), as well as the early colony *Thuburbo Minus*.

<sup>414</sup> Carthaginians: *Thimida Regia*: CIL 8.883; *Abthungi*: CIL 8.23085; *Furnos Minus*: CIL 8.25808. Non-African senators: *Mactaris*: CIL 8.23601; *Sufetula*: CIL 8.11332.

parts of the empire. That the office became far more frequent in Italy under Septimius Severus is clear, suggesting a general policy, but at least in Africa, its application seems to have been at the discretion of the proconsul, and distinctly local in character.

Like the proconsuls, the curators were often enmeshed in the local social fabric; several towns honor them as patrons, and family members are frequently mentioned or honored in their own right.<sup>415</sup> An example is the (undated) senator and *curator rei publicae* of *Utica*, who was patron of the city and was honored together with his daughters, also patronesses.<sup>416</sup> At *Thuburbo Minus*, *Aelia Celsinilla*, mother of the *curator*, was honored as patroness, while at *Vallis* a statue was raised to a *flaminica* and wife of the curator who also appears to have been the curator of *Thubba*.<sup>417</sup> This latter example shows that relatives of curators could hold local positions, a phenomenon usually argued to belong to the 4<sup>th</sup> c., after Diocletian and/or Constantine made critical changes to the office. By then, curators were assigned to every town in the province, and were no longer senators but selected by and from the local councils, essentially a municipal office. That said, curatorships held by town citizens seem to occur from the outset, as suggested

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<sup>415</sup> For instance the statue at *Hippo Regius* (AE 1955.149) is raised by a private client.

<sup>416</sup> CIL 8.1181: *L(ucio) Accio Iuliano Asclepiano c(larissimo) v(iro) co(n)s(uli) cur(atori) rei p(ublicae) Utik(ae) | et Galloniae Octaviae Marcellae C(ai) f(iliae) eius et Acciae | Heuresidi Venantio(!) c(larissimae) p(uellae) et Acciae Asclepianillae | Castorae c(larissimae) p(uellae) filiabus eorum col(onia) Iul(ia) Ael(ia) Hadr(iana) Aug(usta) Utik(a) | patronis perpetuis d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)*.

<sup>417</sup> *Thuburbo Minus*: ILAfr. 414. *Vallis*: CIL 8.1280. The same man is honored at *Thubba* (CIL 8.25376), likely as *curator*, and he is described as *flamen* at Carthage. Other *curatores* that are also patrons of the city: *Furnos Minus*, CIL 8.25808c; *Sicca Veneria*: CIL 8.1651; *Calama*: CIL 8.5356; also at *Pupput*: CIL 8.24095. A statue at *Hippo Regius* (AE 1955.149) is raised to a curator by a private client.



by an example from *Furnos Minus* dating to 220. The curator and patron *Paccius Victor Candidianus* appears a local man, judging by the emphasis on the community being “his.”<sup>418</sup>

The role of the curator was not only to be the object of honors, but he also performed dedications on behalf of his town. The earliest items tells us how the curator *P. Aelius Rusticus* dedicated statues to Caracalla and Julia Domna raised by the *colonia Sufetula*.<sup>419</sup> At the other end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., curators dedicate statues to Carus at *Calama* and *Carthage*.<sup>420</sup> It is unlikely that the early curatorships, any more than the late ones, were ornamental only. As mentioned in chapter II, some see the curators as an attempt to put a lid on irresponsible spending. They appear to have taken over the authorizing tasks of the proconsuls with respect to public spaces, as at *Bulla Regia*, where a Severan curator authorized the erection of a statue by the city to one of its own.<sup>421</sup> The curator’s job description thus closely resembles that of the proconsul earlier, with whom another curator can be seen to cooperate directly in a text from *Calama* which is usually dated to the later 3<sup>rd</sup> c.<sup>422</sup> In persecution proceedings, they appear as responsible for public order, again in

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<sup>418</sup> *CIL* 8.25808. Gasco 1972: 112 rejects the view of H.-G. Pflaum that his citizenship at *Furnos Minus* was honorary only. He held a priesthood at Carthage, showing that he had managed to break into the inner circle of the metropolis, while still maintaining ties to his *origo*.

<sup>419</sup> *Sufetula, ILAfr.* 130-1. A similar contemporary text has been found at *Limisa*; *CIL* 8.12032.

<sup>420</sup> *Calama, CIL* 8.5332; *Carthage, CIL* 8.12522.

<sup>421</sup> *AE* 1962,184b. Jacques 1983: 191-2 argues for an even earlier date, which I find unlikely. The *decernente* formula has a comparandum in a text from *Nattabutes* (Bou Atfan, *CIL* 8.4845) which mentions a proconsul under Severus Alexander. *AE* 1962.184b: *Q(uito) Sili[c]io L(uci) [fi]l(io) Qu[i]r(ina) Victo|rino Corneliano Ho[n]o|ratiano | fl(amini) p(erpetuo) Ilviral(i) aedil(i) | universus populus sin|ceris suffragiis suis et | ordo splendidissimus | gravissimo iudicio decer|nente Burrenio felice cu(ra) | cur(atori) rei p(ublicae) n(ostrae) praeter cetera | eius iuxta omnes merita ob | editionem lusionis primo | p(ecunia) p(ublica) p(osuerunt).*

<sup>422</sup> *CIL* 8.5367, a base in honor of a *Rusticianus* of tribe *Papiria*, affirmed (*firmente*) by the curator and authorized by the proconsuls, in the plural. Perhaps the application process was long enough to span two proconsular terms. The honoree is likely a relative of a later curator of *Calama* of the same name, active in 293-4 (*CIL* 8.5290).

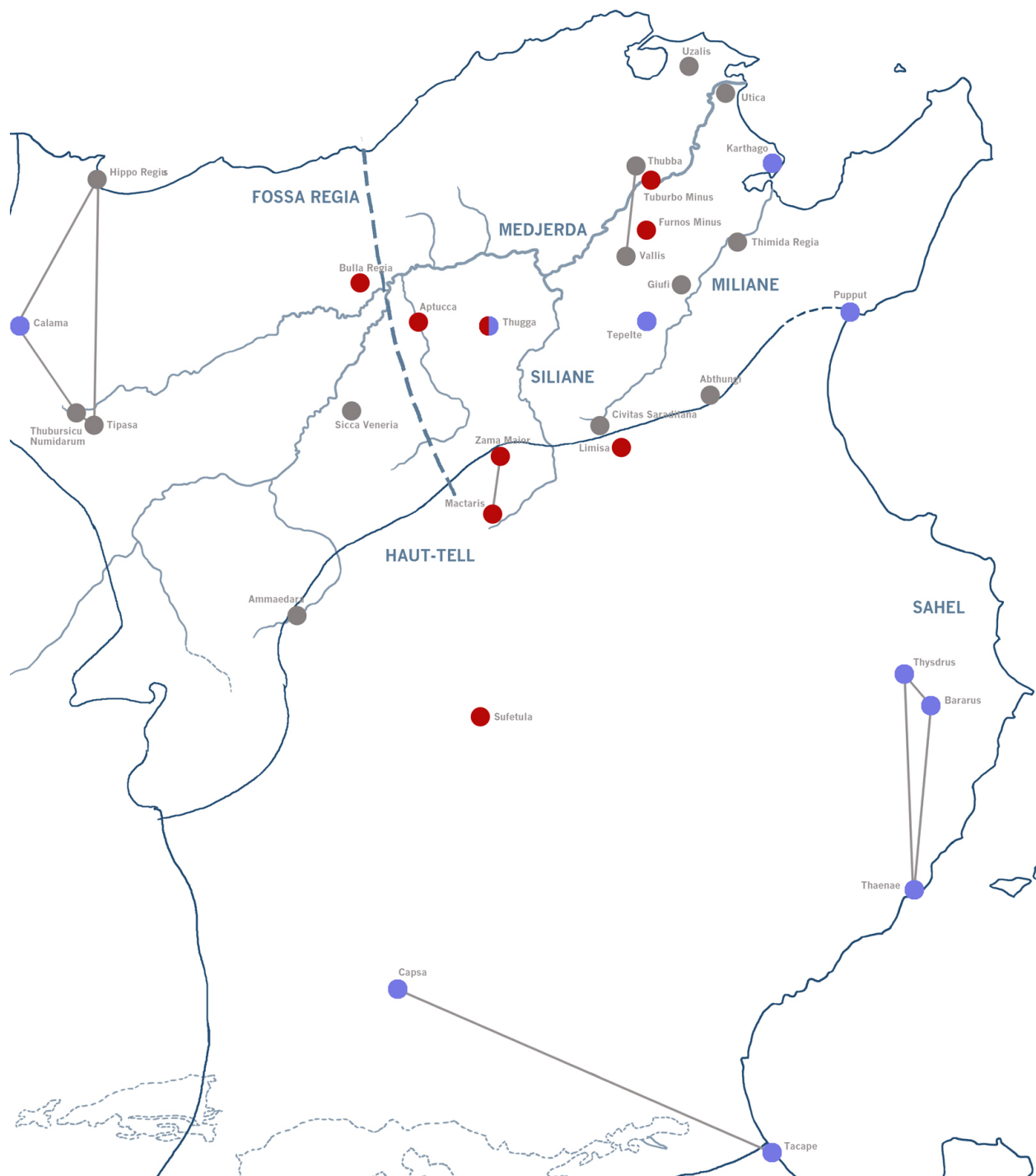


Fig. 8. Towns where a *curator rei publicae* has been attested before Diocletian. A line signifies assignment to more than one town. The record includes no fewer than 6 major ports, multiple items from *Sicca Veneria* and *Thysdrus*, and several towns in the area closest to Carthage, all silent in terms of building epigraphy. Red = Severan dates, blue = late 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

cooperation with the proconsuls.<sup>423</sup> The curators thus share more than one feature with the these as public figures: they appear as dedicators, as the objects of honorifics, as authorizers of public works. They in fact appear to take over these tasks, as the proconsuls disappear suddenly and completely from epigraphy at exactly the same time as the *curatores* become visible in the same roles. Rather than an emergency measure, I suggest that they represent an added layer of the provincial administration, meant to alleviate and decentralize the tasks of the governors. Their presence does thus not imply an extension of the imperial mandate, but (at least potentially) a more effective performance of tasks already handled by the provincial government.<sup>424</sup>

However, in certain aspects their presentation in epigraphy differs from the way the proconsuls or any other imperial official had hitherto been framed. First, they are often honored in their official role, for tasks well served, such as in this inscription from *Thubba* in which the curator is hailed for his *incomparabilis iustitia, integritas, bonitas, and clementia*:

*P(ublio) Cluvio Felici Tertulli[a]n[o(?)]] | fl(amini) p(erpetuo) col(oniae) Iul(iae)  
A(ureliae?) A(ntoniniana?) [Karthaginis(?)] | splendidissimus [---] | petitu eti[am]  
un[iversi po]puli I[---]C[---]I[---] | SI[---] inco[m]parabili iustitia i[n]tegrita[te] bonitate  
clemen[tia] | administrata statu[am] | aere collato posuer[unt].*<sup>425</sup>

<sup>423</sup> Lepelley 1979: 161-2, 191, based on proceedings from *Cirta, Thibiucaae, Tigisis* and *Rusicade*. Relevant for my area is the *Passio sancti Felicis episcopi Thibiensis*, *P. L.* 8.686-687, in which the curator Magnilianus interrogates Felix, but sends him in chains to the court of the proconsul when he proves too difficult to deal with.

<sup>424</sup> Burton 2004: 336-340 describes (as do I) the role of the curators as an extension of the already existing mandate of the governors to handle the affairs of local communities. He however dates the introduction of a permanent layer of administration to the 4th c.

<sup>425</sup> *CIL* 8.25376: “To P. Cluvius Tertullianus, *flamen perpetuus* of the colony Iulia Aurelia Antoniniana Karthago, the most splendid... as demanded by the entire people... for the sake of his incomparable justice and integrity, nobility and clemency in office (...) raised a statue from bronze gathered (from him).”

In another example, a senatorial patron and curator at *Sicca Veneria* is praised for showing the highest *integritas* and *aequitas*:

[S]umm(a)e integritatis adque aequitatis | serva[tori] [d]i[gn]o ac singularis  
 praestan[tiae no]stro patrono [---] | [---] v(iro) c(larissimo) c[ur] (atori) rei p(ublicae)] ob  
 eius | [--- obse]q[uen]tiam e[r]ga universu[m] | ordinem cunctamque plebem Cirtensium  
 Siccensium ordo [---].<sup>426</sup>

This emphasis on the handling of official duties was not seen for proconsuls, whose honorifics were scarce and tended to hail them as private men.<sup>427</sup> Moïra Crété identifies all the above epithets as among those strictly tied to the performance of an office, and adds that *innocentia* and *abstinentia*, both attested in the African material, were reserved for imperial officials.<sup>428</sup>

If this can be seen as mirroring their role as officials, the second new feature complicates the issue: they are frequently described as benefactors, something which we have seen the proconsuls and legates, or indeed emperors, were not. The text from *Furnos Minus* praises its object for his *adfectionem*, which is usually taken as a circumscription for generosity. The same is the case for the formulas *ob merita* and *ob amorem* which Crété argues were absent from honors to imperial officials, but which both occur in a number of examples in the African material for curators together with epithets praising their character.<sup>429</sup> Third, they become

<sup>426</sup> CIL 8.1651: “To our patron a man of the utmost integrity and fairness and a unique sense of duty, clarissimus, curator of the city, for his commitment to the entire *ordo* and the whole people of Cirta Sicca, the *ordo* ...”

<sup>427</sup> Cf. the dedication to a procurator of *Lepcis Magna* and *regio Tripolitana* mentioned on p. 171 above, also praising him for official duties well performed.

<sup>428</sup> Crété 2010: 203-211. Her study is focused on Italy, but the vocabulary became increasingly global through the 3rd c. and is thus relevant for Africa too; the author in fact assigns their origin to my region. *Innocentia*: Puppūt, CIL 8.12253; *Sufetula*, CIL 8.11332; *Thysdrus*, ILAfr. 44. *Abstinentissimus*: Carthage, CIL 8.1165. All but the item from Puppūt are undated.

<sup>429</sup> Crété 2010: 205. *Abthungi*, CIL 8.23085: ... *thugnitatorum ob insignem | eius erga rem publicam et or[dinem et universos cives ad]fectionem et simplicitatem*... ; *Thysdrus*, ILAfr 44: ...

mentioned in relation to the *plebs* or *populus*, sometimes in formulas that are rather striking. Both inscriptions quoted above include them, as do those from *Furnos Minus* and *Bulla Regia*. The *populus* played no role whatsoever in honorifics to proconsuls or legates or even the emperor, nor were they agents, or the audience, of construction by locals. Another formula that breaks from the norm comes from *Giufi*, where the curator is praised for having greatly increased the comfort of the citizens, having shown both generosity (*amorem*) and virtue in office (*iustitia*).<sup>430</sup> These examples conform more closely to the traditional view of elite individuals in the role of benefactors to their communities than to the behavior of other imperial officials.

The image of the curators is ambiguous; they appear both in official and private roles, and have a close relationship to the towns in their care that goes beyond that of proconsuls or legates. Crété describes their position as a balancing act midway between town and state, mirrored in the term *fides*, which is especially common for curators (and attested twice in my material).<sup>431</sup> It is not always clear in whose interest they act; those of the town of which they are in effect the highest magistrate, of the state, or their own. Even in the very first instance it is unclear whether Rusticus dedicated statues to the imperial family in his role as a local official, as a deputy of the proconsul, or again simply as the richest and most well-connected person present. An illustration of the confusion of roles is provided by the undated item from *Tepelte* mentioned above, derived from a statue base to a local man. His tasks as curator are followed by words marking them as official, *egregia fide maxima sollicitudine*, but the text gives his *cursus*, hails him as citizen, and

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*ob [sing]ularem eius innoc[entia]m et ampliata[m] | [semper erga singulos u]niversosq[ue ci]ves inc[omparabi]lem adfectio[nem]...* ; *Thimida Regia*, CIL 8.883: ...*ob merita* .... All are undated, but the first two are assumed to belong to the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c., the last one to be Severan.

<sup>430</sup> CIL 8.865: ...*[com]moda rei p[ublicae] et c[ivibus] | [aucta]* ...

<sup>431</sup> Crété 2010: 204. *Sicca Veneria*, CIL 8.15881; *Tepelte*, CIL 8.12253, both undated.

continues to praise him for restoration projects and games.<sup>432</sup> The inscription is fragmentary, and it is likely that the building activity was not carried out during his curatorship but attaches to some other part of his *cursus*, but it shows how layered the roles of a curator could be, and warns against assuming that he always acted as a representative of the state. If the roles of the proconsuls were dual, for the *curatores rei publicae* they could be triple, or more.

Fourth, and most importantly for this study, they appear as builders, either in their own right or as executors of projects associated with an emperor. In this role they do not appear until Gallienus, from which point onward they are less often attested in an honorific context but appear in inscriptions that concern public spaces, although as we have seen they performed such tasks already early on. If, at least initially, their duties are more likely to have involved limiting than promoting construction, in some of the later texts they are seen to initiate building projects. The first item built by a curator is the forum portico at *Thugga* mentioned above as raised *ex indulgentia* of the emperor in celebration of the *deductio* of the colony.<sup>433</sup> Such cases can be argued to reflect his role as an imperial official, as Christian Lucas suggested for inscriptions that give the activity as a supplement in the ablative, as *curante*.<sup>434</sup> The distinction between private and imperial is harder to make when they built in their own right, as is attested in two cases, as

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<sup>432</sup> Moreover, he had more than one home town, as he appears to be *civis* at *Tepelte* but also a decurion at the old colony *Maxula*. *Tepelte* is not attested as a municipality until Diocletian, so the text likely dates to the late 3rd c. *CIL* 8.12253: [---]o *Mascanis f(ilio) Adiu[t]ori flam(ini)] perp(etuo) aedil(i) decurio[ni in col(onia) Ma]xulit(ana) civi optimo qui | [egregia f]ide maxima sollici[tudine --- rei p]ubl(icae) nego[tia gessit aliisq(ue) reb(us) pu]blicis ab | [Imperatore ---] praepo[situs q]uique | [--- t]empla pecu[nia sua restituit et --- per]iculum con[---]iavit | [et ---]as | [--- operis m]usei | [--- templ]o dedi[cavit et ludos scaenicos ad]siduo dedit | [statuam quam splendidissim]us ordo p(ecunia) p(ublica) [ponen(dam)] | [decreverat honore contenu]s de suo p[osuit] | [d(ecreto)] d(ecurionum).*

<sup>433</sup> See above p. 134. *CIL* 8.10620.

<sup>434</sup> Lucas 1940: 66.

well as for a few statues. An example is the curator of *Capsa* and *Tacape* who built a temple at *Capsa* to the health of Probus, as it seems from his own funds and using the verb characteristic of private benefactions, *dedit*.<sup>435</sup> It is doubtful that this project was carried out on behalf of the state, but should rather be treated as a private project.<sup>436</sup> Also likely recording works performed as a private man is the unique statue base from *Puppit* which hails a patron and curator for restoring much of the civic center.<sup>437</sup> The patrician *Caelius Severus*, probably himself African, built by means of his own “generosity.” These are not then “imperial meddling,” but private enterprises. Both texts date to Probus, showing that even quite late, curators could behave as private elite individuals first, officials second.

These three are the only curators who build before Diocletian, while the vast majority of structures continued to be raised by *flamines* and towns. To term the activities of the *curatores rei publicae* an “imperial takeover” which so depleted the desire of the locals to contribute that the towns spiraled into decline is questionable, to my mind. First, the issue of disappearing euergetism is not as straightforward as one might imagine, as has been shown in the previous chapter. Second, their tasks as officials appear little different from those of the proconsul earlier. Granted, these were likely to be more effectively administered, and the presence of the curators does place the government in closer contact with the towns, which may have been unwelcome in

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<sup>435</sup> *CIL* 8.100. The inscription also includes a consular date, which were always rare in Africa Proconsularis. It may represent conscious archaizing; see below, n. 453.

<sup>436</sup> A statue to a *consularis* at *Sufetula* (*AE* 1964.59, undated) is also explicitly raised at the curator’s own expense.

<sup>437</sup> *CIL* 8.24095: *Thoraci | mirae integritatis in | innocentiae inimita|bilis exempli viro | Caelio Severo v(iro) c(larissimo) patricio | consulari cur(atori) r(ei) p(ublicae) et patrono | col(oniae) Puppit(anorum) qui solus sua libera|litate forum vetustate conlap|sum cum aedibus e|t capi|tolio et curia meliori cultu | restituit et dedicavit | [ordo Puppit(anorum)] patrono perpetuo || dedicata VIII Kal(endas) Iunias | Imp(eratore) [[Probo]] Aug(usto) V et Victorino co(n)s(ulibus).*

some quarters. But if so, the measure should be associated with Septimius Severus, not with the later period, and it remains open whether it represents suppression.<sup>438</sup> Finally, the multiplicity of their roles warns against taking all activity attested for curators as signs of imperial interference in local affairs. This is particularly true post Diocletian, when the curatorship was transformed into a level of the local *cursus*, above the *flamines* and elected by the councils from their own ranks. Described by Lucas as a measure which centralized through decentralizing, this in effect made it the highest ambition of a local decurion to become an imperial official.<sup>439</sup> At the same time, their loyalties must have been even more divided between local and imperial concerns, making for an at times awkward position. To label them “imperial” in the 4<sup>th</sup> c. is problematic, and it comes as no surprise that such building activity by locals as still occurs in the later periods is mainly by *curatores*, who by then represent the same social stratum as earlier the *flamines* (and perhaps the same stages in their careers). In a recent study, Yukata Oshimizu rejects the notion that the widespread appearance of curators from Diocletian onward represents increased state control of provincial towns in any way, but emphasizes the local roles of the curators,

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<sup>438</sup> The chronology of curators in the province Achaia differs strongly from that of Africa – there are no attestations from the mid 3rd to the mid 4th c. – but shares with it a focus on the reign of Septimius Severus, when their number suddenly ballooned, showing that conscious changes were then made to the office. Camia 2007.

<sup>439</sup> In the words of Lucas 1940: 70: ...”his presence seems to indicate not so much interference with local matters on the part of the central authority as a certain centralization of local government from within.” The date of the change is debated; examples of local *curatores* appear early, but are imperial appointments, as in the *Tepelte* inscription. The *terminus ante quem* is provided by a law from 331 (*CTh.* 12.1.20) which demands the completion of the local *cursus* before entering the curatorship. It does not state that the position had to be held in the town in question, and it also seems to imply that curatorships over multiple towns was still a possibility. Gasco 1972: 61 claims they were appointed by the *ordo* from Diocletian onward, rejected by Lepelley 1979: 186, 282-3 who adds a list of high aristocrats, clearly outsiders. I agree that the policy was not entirely implemented under Diocletian, as suggested by the multiple curatorship of *Mactaris* and *Mididi*, but several were likely local men, and from then on all were Africans.



against Lepelley's assertion that they were still first and foremost imperial officials.<sup>440</sup> As for the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., they raised and received statues both in their roles as private men and officials throughout the whole century, and they are attested as builders in both capacities as well.

### *Summary*

Regardless of how we choose to see their activities, this survey has shown that no representative of central government had an impact on building epigraphy even remotely on the scale of what was the case under Diocletian. Such visibility as they had often concerned their private persons and aims rather than imperial policy. In any role, it is a remarkably slim record, which does not accurately reflect their influence, and it is not unlikely that controls were applied. The *curatores rei publicae* appear to have had more freedom (or incentive) to engage in euergetic activities, although in which capacity – as aristocrats, local magistrates or imperial representatives – is far from clear, and their activities are not necessarily to be termed “imperial.” The level of actual interference by the provincial government in the towns at any time is hard to gauge, but there are no reasons to assume that it rose dramatically during the 3<sup>rd</sup> c with the arrival of the curators. In fact, most roles in which they are attested appear already at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., and the only tasks added in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c., those that directly concern construction, appear to have been carried out not as imperial officials but as private men and benefactors; at least the communities did not themselves pay for the structures that they raised.

The emperor himself was not presented as benefactor to the communities of Africa Proconsularis. His image and name were ubiquitous, but their application was defined by local

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<sup>440</sup> Oshimizu 2012: 186-191. Lepelley 1979: 185-8.

processes rather than willed by the emperors: agents, aims, and audiences were all local, with only authorization from above. The emperors worked through less direct means. They certainly had deep economic and political interests in the region and a number of tools at their disposal, but the execution was for the most part delegated to subordinates. These include manipulations of titles, grants of city rights, of permission to raise structures and statues, appointments to offices, or more generally, legal pronouncements regulating construction and *munera*. Some emperors chose to take a more active stance, and in particular the reign of Septimius Severus comes across as a period of decisive changes. But the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries present no drastic fluctuations in the degree to which emperors and imperial officials are active as builders, which remains so low throughout as to be well-nigh non-existent. Regional differences within my area are noticeable, with a stronger connection to imperial authorities evident in the periphery than in the Northeast, where Carthage and its elites form the main center of gravity for those ambitious, but the difference is slight. In other parts of Africa, the provincial administration played a more prominent role in the upkeep of the towns. This was however often focused on military concerns, which makes it difficult to extract an idea of how far imperial authorities were concerned with civic architecture generally. The one potential exception is a small cache of building inscriptions from farming communities in Mauretania, which describe a more involved role on the part of imperial authorities toward the built environment, and, importantly, a concern with broadcasting this to the locals.

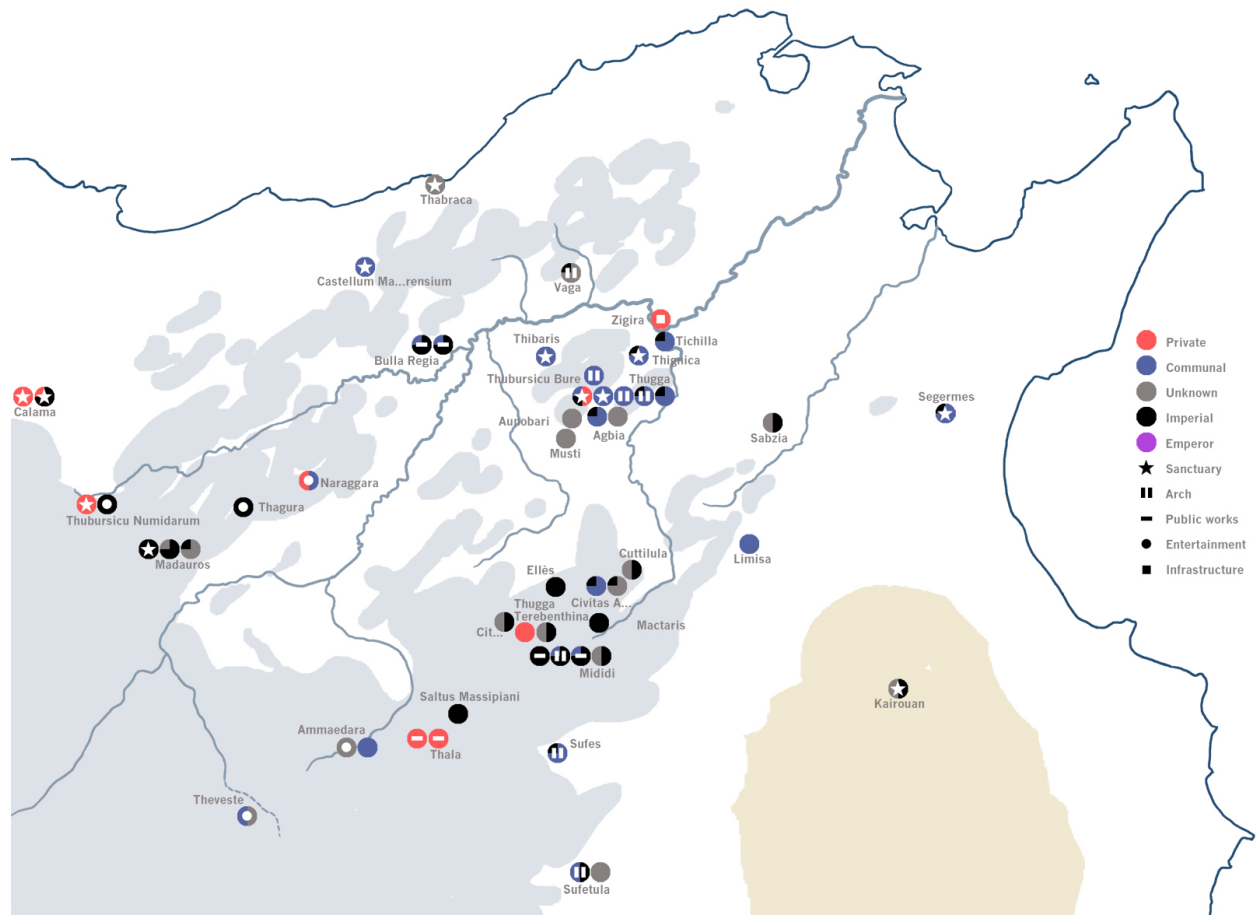


Fig. 9. Construction under Diocletian, showing entertainment structures in the West, public works in Byzacena, and celebratory temples and arches in the Northeast. The empty areas are the same as for any reign. Most of the undated fragments from the Sahel have been attributed to Diocletian, although only the inscription from *Thysdrus* is convincing. A remarkable number of towns have their first and only showing of building epigraphy, including *Aunobari*, *Castellum Ma...rensiu*, *Cit...*, *Civitas A...*, *Cuttilula*, *Ellès*, *Naraggara*, *Sabzia*, *Segermes*, *Sufes*, *Thabraca*, *Thugga Terebenthina* and *Zigira*. No text is known indirectly from a statue base. For a full list of building inscriptions dated to the period, see Appendix B.

#### **IV. BUILDING INSCRIPTIONS UNDER DIOCLETIAN**

The aim with this, the last chapter to examine the epigraphic record, is to establish the character of the inscriptions dating to the reign of Diocletian. With the help of conclusions drawn from the previous two chapters, I will examine the content of the texts, as well as the locations, objects and agents they make visible. I will point to continuities with earlier practices, but also to breaks from them that will need explaining. This I will attempt to do in the following chapter.

With the accession of Diocletian, the frequency of building inscriptions picked up dramatically, as it seems early in his reign. More than 60 texts have been found in North Africa, most of them from the study area where as many as 53 individual projects have been attested. The average for Diocletian's reign is 2.5 per year, to be compared to 1.4 for Pius and 2.5 for Marcus. It is only trumped by that for Septimius Severus and Caracalla, at 3.5 per year. This peak in the record has been unanimously attributed to regained prosperity in the wake of the crisis decades, on the assumption that the rate of building epigraphy faithfully reflects the rate of actual construction. I have already expressed doubts as to the validity of this assumption, and this doubt extends to the "rebirth" – does the return of building epigraphy really signify increased building activity, and as such, a release from crisis? Is the activity attested during the reign of Diocletian of the same kind as the earlier, and thus comparable?

As seen in the previous chapters, different types of builders produced inscriptions that were distinct in terms of formulas, objects, aims and audiences, as well as chronology and spatial distribution. To understand the Diocletianic record, it has been necessary to establish to what genres the texts belong, and if they reappear under the same circumstances. The record of local builders will be treated first, followed by a more thorough examination of the activity of imperial

officials, which shows stark breaks with previous conventions; so much so as to justify considering it a distinct genre. For both categories of agents, peculiarities in spatial and temporal distribution have been identified that to my mind make “natural” explanations of the reappearance of building epigraphy problematic.

#### **IV.1 Construction by local agents**

If the record for building epigraphy from 217 to Diocletian shows diminished frequencies, in other aspects it remains unchanged – agents, objects, locations, and formulas display strong continuity with previous periods. The majority of the builders remain private men and towns, the objects announced predominantly temples and arches, raised for the same aims as before and presented with the same phrases. The only truly novel feature, the appearance on the scene of the *curatores rei publicae*, had a relatively low impact on the record of building inscriptions. With the accession of Diocletian, construction by locals increased drastically, at a rate that compares well to earlier reigns even with imperial agents discounted, as much as 1.9 per year. Even so, elite construction activity from this period has not been closely scrutinized. The one study by Waldherr that treats Diocletianic era construction in Africa was not concerned with the activities of locals, but strove instead to identify their construction as imperial. In his bid to make the Diocletianic record an expression of a “Baupolitik,” he interpreted both Capitolia, honorific arches and construction by *flamines* as informed by central policy. This would in effect make nearly all African construction at any time “imperial,” and must be rejected.<sup>441</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Waldherr 1989: 80, 142-3, 412.

A first glance at the geography of the inscriptions of local builders suggests that their items are evenly spread, including areas that had been silent since Caracalla: the West and Byzacena are active quite on a par with the Northeast, which is noteworthy but not novel – these areas were active also under Septimius Severus. However, when subdividing the period in two, it becomes evident that the distribution in differs dramatically from previous norms. During the first 10 years of Diocletian’s reign, all attested instances but one are located in the West and Byzacena, which show more testimonies of elite construction activity than during any period save the peak years under Septimius Severus. By contrast, the Northeast, where the practice had always been the strongest, shows one of its poorest records of the entire imperial period, with only one inscription in evidence from the death of Tacitus in 276 to the institution of the Tetrarchy in 293, and this item is quite possibly an altar or a statue rather than a building.<sup>442</sup> It seems thus that center and periphery had switched places. The Northeast begins to produce inscriptions at a high pace during the Tetrarchy, but distinct differences remain between the two areas – the agents, objects, and types of communities built in are not the same. In the Northeast, though not infrequent, building inscriptions only appear at a few locations, and not, as previously, dispersed through the area. Most of them cling to the major roads, which suggests that some may have been posted in response to the *adventus* of Maximian, who wintered at Carthage in 297-8. The association is however not strong, as most of them were dedicated either too early or too late to bear any relation to these events. By contrast, in the periphery entirely new locations pop into view beside the well known cities; several communities make their *début*, both tiny towns off the beaten track such as *Cuttilula* and *Thugga Terebinthina* and more sizeable but hitherto silent

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<sup>442</sup> *CIL* 8.1488, dating to 285-290, and set in the wall next to a temple to Minerva.

ones such as *Naraggara* and *Calama*. The medium thus permeates the region in a way that it had never done before, even under Septimius Severus.

This inclusiveness carries over into the sphere of agents: several of the individuals who built did not belong to families of any previous notability. As examples of builders with obscure lineage may be mentioned the three *Modestii* who built a temple to Virtus at *Thubursicu Numidarum* and whose names betray non-elite origins, the *seniores* at the village *Ma...rensium*, which does not qualify as a town, and the *magistri* of the imperial estate *Fundus Iubalt(iensis?)*.<sup>443</sup> None of these are cut from the typical mold of municipal elites, and some are tied to estates. I would not go so far as to term them non-elite, but it gives a hint of the wide social spectrum involved. Alongside them appear builders who belong to the more established classes visible in the medium, local magistrates of comparable status to earlier builders such as a knight of local descent, a man whose name displays contact with a row of prominent African families, and also a patron who restored baths at *Naraggara*, suggesting that the activities associated with the higher elites also continued, on the conventional pattern.<sup>444</sup> Finally, a fair number of towns appear as builders. All 2<sup>nd</sup> c. categories of agents are thus represented. In the Northeast, by contrast, private builders are almost nonexistent, mentioned in only two texts of

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<sup>443</sup> *Castellum Ma...rensium*, *CIL* 8.17327; temple to Pluto at a *fundus* near Kairouan, *CIL* 8.11217; *Thubursicu Numidarum*, *ILAlg.* 1.1241. The cult of Virtus is associated with Bellona and is attested at nearby *Madauros* through a dedication mentioning the *hastiferi* or *cisthiferi* of Virtus (*ILAlg.* 1.2071). As in this case, the inscription lists a number of *sacerdotes*. The Virtus shrine was dedicated with rare formulas of devotion, which for the most part were associated with Berber cults, and never attested in the *ob honorem* context.

<sup>444</sup> For the first two, see inscriptions below at pp. 189. Several *Sulpicii* are buried at *Thala*. For *Calama*, *ILAlg.* 1.1187. It is not for office, but conforms to the type of objects associated with high status benefactors, and the text mentions utility. It is unusual in that it is co-funded by the city, which is perhaps why it came to be inscribed. The name is regrettably lost.

which one is of disputed date.<sup>445</sup> Nearly all texts present the objects as built by towns, sometimes dedicated by a governor or curator.

The Northeast differs from the periphery also in the choice of objects, with a marked tendency toward “celebratory” structures, lending the record an air of overblown honorifics. Among them are four imperial arches, a temple to the *genii* of the emperors and another to the *gens Valeria*, and three further dedications to the emperors directly that may plausibly also represent arches.<sup>446</sup> Such projects are not absent from the periphery – there are two arches in Byzacena dedicated to emperors – but celebratory items do not dominate the record. Instead, the edifices inscribed follow the more haphazard pattern familiar from the “boom” years, with dedications to a wide variety of deities along with quite a few public works.<sup>447</sup> The diversity of both builders, objects and locations is thus much greater in Byzacena and the West than in the Northeast, where only a certain type of building activity continued to be inscribed. It should be

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<sup>445</sup> A temple to the *genius patriae* Pluto at *Thugga* (CIL 8.26472), with a number of private men listed as contributors, and a unique but highly fragmentary inscription from *Zigira* (CIL 8.25895) mentioning a public granary, otherwise not attested in my area. It appears to have been raised for office and is thus a private item, but the date is not clear. It is in any case later than 293. The text appears to mention municipal curators on a pattern not seen since the 2nd c.

<sup>446</sup> Arches: *Thubursicu Bure*, CIL 8.15258; two at *Thugga*, 8.15516a-b; CIL 8.26563; *Vaga*, perhaps only the rededication of a Severan arch, CIL 8.14401; shrine to the *genii* of the emperors (inscription described *in situ* by the traveler Thomas of Arcos) at *Thignica*, CIL 8.1411; temple to *gens Valeria* at *Thibaris*, AE 2003.2010. Dedications at *Agbia*, CIL 8.1550; *Musti*, CIL 8.1581; *Tichilla*, CIL 8.1362. Exceptions are the (not securely dated) granary at *Zigira* and Pluto temple mentioned in n. 442, and a shrine to *Mater Deum*, a cult with imperial connotations.

<sup>447</sup> The record suggests that the African religious practices that were tied to municipal careers had remained much the same since the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., even though the shrines were no longer inscribed. Among the dedications are a shrine to Apollo at *Calama* (CIL 8.5333a-d); to Mercury at *Castellum Ma...rensiu* (CIL 8.17327); to Pluto on an estate near Kairouan (CIL 8.11217); a Capitoline temple at *Segermes* (CIL 8.906); restoration of a Jupiter temple at *Thabraca* (CIL 8.17329) which could be seen as celebratory, but it has no imperial dedicatory formula, making this unlikely. There are celebratory items as well, such as the transfer of a shrine of Fortuna Victrix at *Calama* (CIL 8.5290).



stated at once that there is nothing new about celebratory structures; they are quite frequent in the 2nd c. record, raised both by towns and *ob honorem* builders. After the reign of Gallienus, when temples to a range of deities still appear (such as Mercury, Serapis, and Tellus), celebratory items by towns become the sole items inscribed. All temples are dedicated to either Sol, imperial Victories, or Concord.<sup>448</sup> There are no earlier Sol sanctuaries in the area, and their appearance during the reign of Aurelian strongly suggests that the dedications were associated with the emperor.<sup>449</sup> Nothing, however, suggests that they were in any way raised *by* the emperors or their representatives: all items are municipal or private, with no involvement from governors or curators. A shrine to the imperial Victories at *Membressa* was built for office, presenting family members and funding on the same pattern as in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c.<sup>450</sup> The same applies to the projects that date to Diocletian, all municipal save the arch at *Vaga*, where the agent is not given.

Nor is there anything new about the formulas with which they were commemorated. The content of the texts on the celebratory items in the Northeast follows established conventions. What is novel is their frequency, limited geographical spread, and the absence of other builders. The same consistency with earlier practices obtains also in the West and Byzacena. Two texts

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<sup>448</sup> Sol: *Gens Bacchuiana*, Aurelian (CIL 8.23924); *Chidibbia*, Probus (CIL 8.1329); Concord: *Madauros*, Aurelian (ILAlg. 1.2035); Imperial victories: *Membressa*, Tacitus (ILPBardo 389).

<sup>449</sup> Votive dedications to Sol appear in Africa through the 3rd c. but exclusively in a military context; AE 1962.304 (Aïn El Avenia, 209-11), AE 1933.47 (El Kantara, 209-211), AE 1933.46 (El Kantara, 211-217), AE 1985.976 (*Altava*, 221), CIL 8.2676 (*Lambaesis*, 270-75), AE 1973.633 (*Lambaesis*, 284).

<sup>450</sup> ILPBardo 389: *Victoriis Au[gustis] | [Imp(eratoris) Ca]es(aris) M. Claudii Taciti pii felicis Aug(usti) pont(ificis) ma[x(imi) ---] | [Q. N]umisius Primus aedilic(ius) du(u)m virali[c(ius) aedem? quam] | [ex] HS XVI mil(ibus) n(ummum) facere promiserat mult[iplicata pecunia cum] | [Num]isiis Praetextato et Primo filis et Nonia[--- coniuge perfecit?] | [et cert]amina pugilum edidit. Quam et [---].*

from *Thala* on the High Steppe and *Thugga Terebinthina* on the High Tell demonstrate how the epigraphic conventions associated with local builders had survived:

*AES* | [[*Impp(eratoribus) dd(ominis) nn(ostris) Dio*]] | [[*cletiano III et Ma*]] | [[*ximiano*]] | *II co(n)ss(ulibus) | hh(eredes) Sulpicii Felicis istu|t opus plateae quam | Felix pater `eq(ues) R(omanu)s' ob aedi|litis suae honorem pr|omisit c(ivitati) n(ostrae) ð cum gradib(us) | III propriis sumptibus pe[r]|fecerunt per Sul(piciu)m Prim(um) tut(orem).*<sup>451</sup>

[---]nitus [---] fl(aminis) p(erpetui) filius Me[---] | [---]id patriam Iuli Fanni Delfi Victorini Anic[iani? ---] | [---] munera consecutus flamonium e[st ---] | [---] susceptam fili sui Iucundi S[---] | [---] gradibus et ornamentis om[ni]bus [---] | [---] familia [---] | eorum [---].<sup>452</sup>

The focus remains on the locality, the aim is still local positions, and the projects are undertaken as a family. Several generations are in evidence in both projects; the city square dedicated to an unknown deity at *Thala* is completed by the children of the aedile who promised it, under tutelage of another relative, while the construction of a temple at *Thugga Terebinthina* is an ancestral project on the Severan model, a son of a *flamen* adding funds for his own flamine. The aedile built public works, which is again consistent with earlier practice. The emperor still has nothing to do with it; all private projects are initiated by the locals themselves, as it seems under much the same circumstances as earlier. They appeal to their *patria* and *civitas*, and one uses consular dating which may represent archaizing.<sup>453</sup> The sole private item from the Northeast

<sup>451</sup> *CIL* 8.23291, *Thala*: “*AES* .. in the year of our emperors and lords Diocletian, thrice consul, and Maximian, twice consul, the heirs of *Sulpicius Felix* completed out of their own money the work of a city square with three steps which *Felix* their father, a Roman knight, promised to our town for his aedileship, through the administration of *Sulpicius Primus* their tutor.”

<sup>452</sup> *AE* 2000.1641: “...*itus, flamen perpetuus* son of M.. this to the *patria*, of *Iulius Fannius Delfius Victorinus Anic*... civic obligations, in pursuit of the flamine ... and assuming those of his son *Iucundus* ... with steps and all accoutrements ... family ... of theirs.”

<sup>453</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 52, 66 n. 337, 78, 88 n. 493, 296, 336 n. 2217, calls this a “traditional” element, used consciously for effect in one 4th c. text (*AE* 1992.1767). Consular dates are few in African building inscriptions during the empire. Although common among items dating to the 1st

also includes the conventional elements: members of family, funds spent, flaminates sought, and dedication ceremonies, confirming that the practices had survived intact. In fact, these texts bear witness to a continuity that goes beyond simply preserving the form and content of building inscriptions – they suggest a continuous practice. Both items quoted above display at least one generation of depth. In spite of the disjointed nature of the record, with its alternating silences and sudden blazes of visibility, the construction projects themselves seem rather “business as usual,” not a sudden and unexpected outburst of new construction after decades of inactivity. They involve the same agents and elements – family, funding, careers, appeals to the glory of the home town – and build the same types of objects as had been established since at least a century and a half.<sup>454</sup> Furthermore, they are still to the point, with none of the flowery language that came to inflate the texts in Late Antiquity.<sup>455</sup> Diocletianic inscriptions of any subgroup of local builders conform entirely to the conventions in evidence during the principate.

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c. BCE (used in 3 of 7 inscriptions) and used as a manner of imperial dedication under Domitian, there are only two instances from Africa Proconsularis from his death until Probus (*ILPBardo* 411, *CIL* 8.27551, both unusual in other respects as well), when it reappears in a text from *Capsa* by a *curator rei publicae* (*CIL* 8.100), followed by two items that date to Diocletian, the text from *Thala* and another from nearby *Ammaedara* (*CIL* 8.309). They are used on occasion in military contexts in Numidia in the 3rd c., but not in the areas here treated.

<sup>454</sup> The slim record from other African provinces includes a temple to the *Dii Mauri* at *Albulae* (*CIL* 8.12665 by a curator, as it seems as a private man), an unknown item by the council of *Cedias* (*CIL* 8.17655), and arches by the council of *Macomades* (*CIL* 8.4764) and a duumvir at *Nigrenses Maiores* (*CIL* 8.2480-1). The latter, as well as *Cedias*, are *limes* establishments, and the works there date to the Dyarchy.

<sup>455</sup> Salomies 1994: 72, 79-80, 99-100 on “amplification” in honorifics from the Severans, felt especially in the 4-5th c. Examples are superlatives in the titulature (markedly under Septimius Severus), unnecessary multiplication of predicates, e.g. *refecit exornavitque* (*AE* 1955.137, *Lambaesis*, 198), and adding attributes such as genitives of quality. Rhetorical figures start appearing from the Tetrarchy onward.

### *Rebirth?*

Should the reemergence of building epigraphy under Diocletian be termed “rebirth”? There are several problems with this view. If we see epigraphic commemoration as accurately representing construction, then the areas where it appears the most had little to renew – in several cases, this is the first time they are attested as using the medium at all, and one must talk about “birth” rather than “rebirth.” The Northeast does not display the full spectrum of activity of the “boom” years; only a particular, monumental genre returns, and fewer townships appear to have engaged. The limited use of building inscriptions in the area is not easily explained through arguments about prosperity. There are no obvious reasons why the councilors of a town like *Abitinae*, described as having a fully functional *ordo* in the passion of saints Saturninus and Dativus *et al.*, should be any less able to erect public buildings than the *seniores* at *Castellum Ma...rensium* on the northwestern fringe, which was not even a town.<sup>456</sup> If wealth was the factor that determined building epigraphy, then the first 9 years of Diocletianic rule was the wealthiest period the periphery ever saw, while for the Northeast it was the poorest, worse than the deepest throes of the “crisis.” The silence in many Northeastern towns which used to produce building inscriptions is, I believe, a fairly good argument in favor of an “epigraphic habit” affecting the record.

A sign that they were, in fact, alive and well is the distribution of imperial statues, which includes many such “silent” towns, testifying to their continued vitality. Nor does archaeology support any drastic decline of the urban spaces, as mentioned earlier.<sup>457</sup> Competition between

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<sup>456</sup> *Passio SS. Dativi, Saturnini et sociorum* (ed. Franchi de’Cavalieri 1935). The text mentions the proconsul Annius Anullinus, who dedicated the shrine of the *genii* of the emperors at *Thignica* in 303-304 (*CIL* 8.1411).. *Castellum Ma...rensium*: the restoration of a temple dedicated to Mercury, for their own money: *CIL* 8.17327.

<sup>457</sup> See chapter II p. 121 n. 291.

locals appears no longer to be expressed through building epigraphy. Perhaps it had become passé to flaunt offices in these more entrenched elite areas, or other media were favored for the texts, such as bronze. Stone may have been used on the more celebratory structures, lending them an old-fashioned air. Furthermore, the role of the towns as platforms for launching careers may no longer have been as relevant after dissolution of the *pertica* – likely, such manifestations became increasingly focused on Carthage instead. If so, it is ironic that the dissolution, if, as many argue, intended as a blow at this city, had the consequence of strengthening its position.

In the periphery, the practice of inscribing buildings was never deeply rooted, and to use it as an index of wealth is problematic. The items quoted above suggest that construction had been ongoing even though not documented in (surviving) inscriptions, a continuity which indicates that prosperity was not the prime reason for the sudden appearance of the medium. The *Thala* item was raised in 287, too early to be a response to brighter times brought on by Diocletian. At least some part of what we see may represent a momentary rendering in stone, inspired by the imperial projects to be treated below and which touched on the same areas, of a process that was continuous, but normally communicated in other ways. This may well be the explanation for the peculiar silence in the Northeast as well. To assess the rate at which such projects were actually undertaken, thus, is not easy from this material. The peaks under Diocletian should not be seen as secure evidence of “renewal” any more than the lull can be taken as proof of “decline.”

The phenomenon disappears as abruptly as it arrived: the reign of Maxentius is entirely devoid of building epigraphy, which could perhaps be put down to the revolt of Domitius Alexander, which began in 308. No doubt the *damnatio memoriae* against Maxentius affects the record as well, although Maximian, whose name can still be discerned in numerous texts, also

suffered one. But the Maxentian war in Africa does not explain why the silence should continue under Constantine, which in no way reflects actual levels of prosperity, nor of construction. The African economy was booming in the 4<sup>th</sup> c., reaching its highest peak in Roman imperial history (as will be treated in chapter V), and the towns display a considerable degree of wealth through new lavish *domus*. That public construction was at a low is a conclusion drawn solely from the lack of building epigraphy. Seeing that the only manner of construction inscribed in the last half century or so were shrines to emperors, it is perhaps no surprise that we see little of it henceforth.

Although the reigns of Julian and Valentinian I have yielded respectable numbers, the practice of inscribing buildings never regained its old vitality. By then, changes had occurred, most strikingly to the language applied but also to the agents and objects involved.<sup>458</sup> The towns so visible in the 3rd c. record are gone from view, while private builders are no longer for the most part *flamines*, but *curatores rei publicae*. Temples had, for obvious reasons, ceased to be the favored objects, but they were not replaced by inscriptions commemorating the construction of churches. Either stone had ceased to be the common medium for inscriptions, or the act of inscribing had gone out of fashion, or the competition between local families had assumed other forms than public construction, such as public shows, as seen in many late mosaics.

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<sup>458</sup> Saastamoinen regards the florid 4th c. inscriptions as a distinct genre; see chapter II p. 120 n. 289. The object, far more frequently a public bath, is much emphasized, and phrases that allude to their usefulness at times occur. For an example, e.g. *ILAlg. 1.2101 (Madauros): Pro tanta securi[tate temporum] | dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Valentiniani [et Valentis perpetuo]rum Au[g(ustorum)] | [therm]as aestivas olim splen[did(issimae)] coloni[ae] nostrae orn[a]mentum sed tot re]tro annis ruinarum labe deformes pa[rietibusque omni]um soli[orum] ita corruptis ut gravibus damnis adficerent [nun]c omni idonitate con|structas et cultu splendido decoratas sed et patinas ampliato aeris pondere | omni idonitate firmissimas proconsulatu Publi Ampeli v(iri) c(larissimi) Octavio Privatia|no v(iro) c(larissimo) legato Numidiae C(a)ec(ilius) Pontilius Paulinus ffl(amen) p(er)p(etuus) p(atronus) c(oloniae) curator reip(ublicae) pecunia | publica perfecit porticum quo[q]ue ingredientibus ab atrio sed et pronaum | eidem coh(a)erentem commeantibus per viam trabibus tignis [---] ceterisque | [--- Pont]ilius Pauli[nus ---] ordine.*

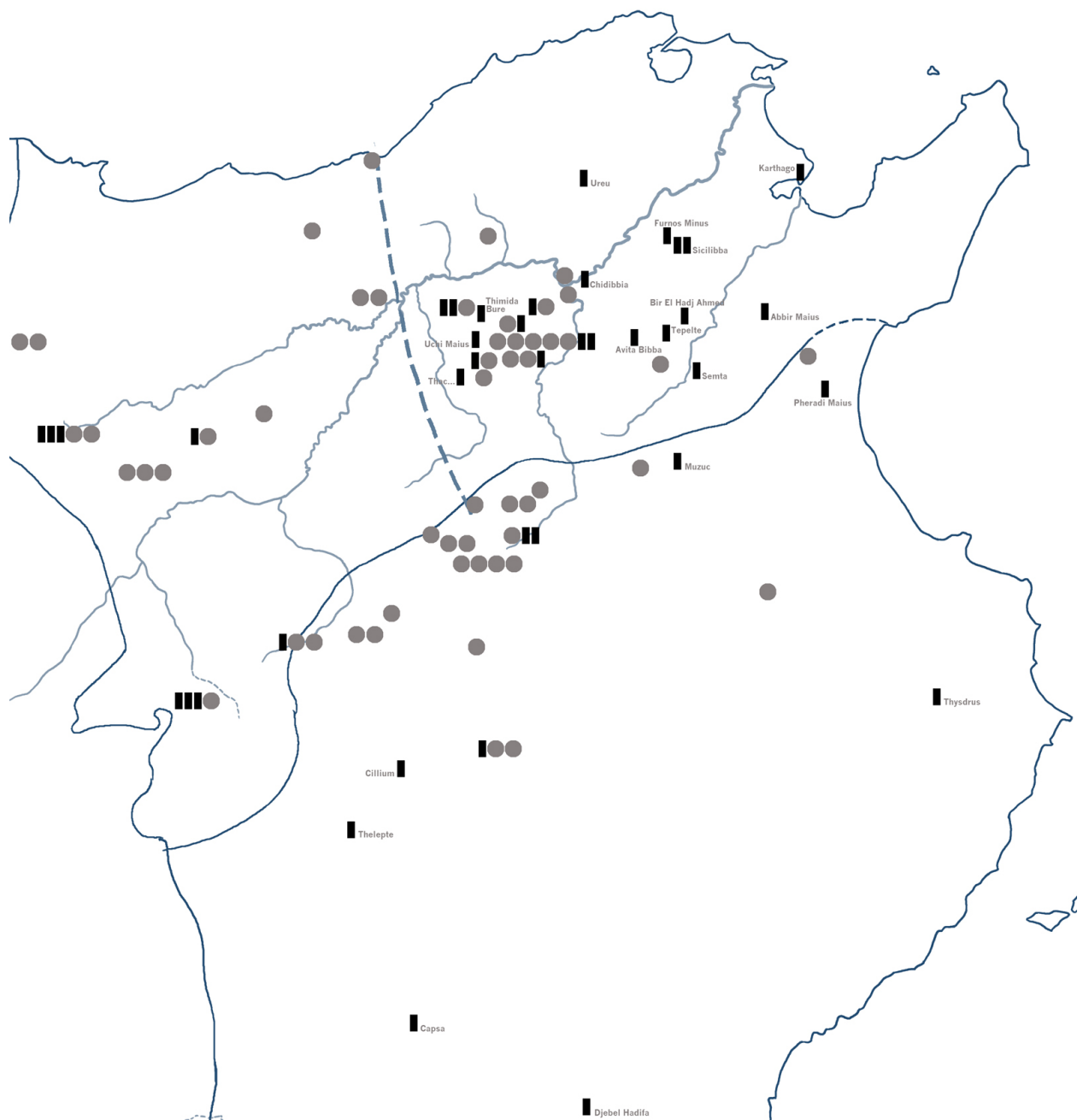


Fig. 10. Imperial statues to Diocletian and peers (the standing rectangles in black) compared to contemporary construction. The distribution corresponds well to previous epigraphy, with most items in the river area of the Northeast together with the main towns of the periphery. The vast majority are raised by locals.

## IV.2 Imperial construction

The most notable changes in the Diocletianic record concern imperial construction, which is broadcast in entirely new ways, especially in how it featured the provincial governors. It is not primarily the emperors themselves who are presented as builders, although there are some rather striking instances further to the west where they are.<sup>459</sup> Often quoted are inscriptions from *Rapidum* and *Sitifis* in Mauretania Caesariensis which involve large scale restoration initiatives associated with Maximian's campaign in the area, as is a horreum at *Tubusuctu*. In the same province, a bridge at *Auzia* was restored on imperial orders, after being destroyed by the ravages of war. Furthermore, no fewer than three items from *Lambaesis* present Diocletian and Maximian in the nominative. They predate the African campaign, and as before, the presentation of the emperors as directly involved with works at army camps is somewhat fictional. This goes for the Mauretanian projects as well, all save the horreum the responsibility of the governors (and the *Auzia* project again predating the visit of the emperor). The texts are likely their compositions, although Maximian may have commanded that the projects be undertaken.

No such inscriptions have been found in my area.<sup>460</sup> Games personally funded (*propriis*) by the emperors were held at the newly restored amphitheatre at *Ammaedara*, and it is likely that the construction mentioned in the same text is also attributable to imperial authorities, perhaps

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<sup>459</sup> There are instances at *Lambaesis* where the aqueduct was restored in 290-293 (*CIL* 8.2572, *CIL* 8.2660, *CIL* 8.2718) and in 305 at *Tubusuctu*, also likely tied to the military (*CIL* 8.8836). None of these coincide with his personal presence.

<sup>460</sup> The one contender in my material for direct imperial involvement is an arch at *Sufetula* which Waldherr 1989: 184-5 argued to have been raised by Maximian himself, en route from Carthage to a second campaign in Tripolitania. The fragmented text (*CIL* 8.232) includes *istic in provincia sua*, "here in his/her province," which, to me, suggests that the person should be identified as the governor, likely of the newly created province Byzacena. This is also the opinion of Lepelley, who attributes the erection of the arch to the governor, while I have been more restrictive and considered him only partly responsible. For the campaign, see chapter I pp. 36, 40.



even to the emperors personally, but the text is too fragmentary to tell.<sup>461</sup> It was accompanied by a theatre portico built by the city, which styled itself *colonia Ammaedara restituta* in celebration of the recently finished campaign.<sup>462</sup> Maximian may well have been present, as the date given is the Kalends of April 299 – an unusually traditional temporal formula for African inscriptions – just before he left Africa to hold his triumph in Rome. The many milestones, almost as many as Caracalla's, are at times interpreted as actual roadwork, but this is open to doubt as they are all in the dedicatory format.<sup>463</sup> Some include the names of towns dedicating, making their relation to honorifics stronger than during earlier reigns.<sup>464</sup> The literary testimonies to construction in the area are limited to Carthage, where however no structures have been securely identified that can be associated with Diocletian and Maximian.<sup>465</sup> That construction did occur there is not to be doubted, and likely went beyond the baths mentioned by Eusebius.<sup>466</sup> The vicar of the African diocese was installed there, which would have required some monumental trappings. The new capital of Byzacena, *Hadrumetum*, likely also saw its public spaces modified to fit this role.<sup>467</sup>

A long row of administrative centers around the empire housed imperial monuments in proximity to buildings that served as seats of provincial administration, and this is no doubt the

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<sup>461</sup> *ILTun.* 461. Although suggestive, I have recorded it as by an unknown builder.

<sup>462</sup> *CIL* 8.309, with consular date. Kalends appears only once more among building inscription in my sample, in an in many ways unusual text dating to Alexander Severus (*CIL* 8.15497).

<sup>463</sup> Pasqualini 1979: 124 takes them as signs of true investment, as did Pierre Salama 1987 in his seminal work on African milestones.

<sup>464</sup> E.g. *AE* 1934.31, *Vallis*; *AE* 1987,1008d, *Furnos Minus*; *CIL* 8.21995, *Vaga*.

<sup>465</sup> Save the attempt by Henry Hurst to identify a complex in the harbor district as an imperial textile factory installed at Carthage according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which has however been received with skepticism; see Leone 2007: 80; Hurst 1994.

<sup>466</sup> Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 39.45; Eusebius, *Chron. ad a. 302g*.

<sup>467</sup> Duval 1997: 151 claims at least three residences for imperial magistrates were required at Carthage. Lavan 2003b: 315-6 describes the range of buildings that can be assumed to have been erected at *Hadrumetum*.

case in Africa as well, although any traces have been destroyed or buried under subsequent habitation.<sup>468</sup> Judging by other regional capitals, the works in question were likely carried out by the governors, as are the only imperial monuments of note in the African provinces, the *Arae Philaenorum* on the eastern border of the new province *Tripolitania*, and an altar on its western border close to *Thelepte*.<sup>469</sup> Apart from his potential, but not very likely, personal involvement at *Ammaedara*, it seems Maximian, like Septimius Severus or Hadrian before him, did not mark his presence by raising structures with his name on it in my area, at least not outside the capitals.

#### *Governors, legates and curators build*

The most marked change is without question the behavior of the proconsuls and legates, who were involved with the major share of the items marked “imperial” on the maps. Although curators are active as well (if no longer in the sweeping euergetic role some seem to have had under Probus) and become more so as time progresses, it is the highest layer of the provincial administration that is presented as builders, in rather active roles. Some texts mention them in the nominative as directly responsible, others feature them as initiators and coordinators. A curator is

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<sup>468</sup> Listed in Eck 2006 with many more suggestions by Thiel 2006. Among examples of towns which housed monuments of this kind, consisting for the most part of pillars to one or more emperor and raised by governors (when known), are Alexandria, Antioch, Bostra, Caesarea Maritima, Ephesos, Gerasa, Heraclea in Thrace, Heliopolis, Mytilene on Lesbos, Palmyra, Philippopolis in Syria, Rome, Salamis, and Turris Libisonis on Sardinia.

<sup>469</sup> *Thelepte* altar: *CIL* 8.23179; the *Arae Philaenorum*: *AE* 1954.184a-b. On the monument, see Goodchild 1976 and Dal Bosco & Grassi 2002. The name is likely to be that of *C. Valerius Vibianus*, first governor of Tripolitania and dedicator of the *Thelepte* altar. He was awarded a statue in 302, the body of which has recently been reunited with its head; Lenaghan 2012. The erection of the baths at Carthage was no doubt supervised by the proconsul *P. Aelius Helvius Dionysius*, who also conducted construction at Rome for the Dyarchs (as *curator operum publicorum*). He served as urban prefect after 301 and was thus in charge of the construction of the baths there as well. For his early career, see *CIL* 6.1673.

at times managed the projects (or secured the financial support for it), but it is the proconsul and/or legate who are for the most part presented as initiators, and not infrequently also as executors and dedicators. The change is not the result of a gradual development, but sudden – always few in the record, no proconsul had appeared as builder in the area since Commodus, and save one item dating to Gallienus, not as dedicator either. Their appearance on the epigraphic scene is without question willed; the question is, willed by whom – does it reflect a centrally conceived policy, or did the initiative originate closer to the ground?

The immediate answer is that the inscriptions were formulated by the proconsul of Africa, *T. Aurelius Aristobulus*, and the *legatus Numidiae*, *C. Macrinus Sossianus* (both 290 – 294) who are presented as involved with the majority of the items in the dossier. Most of the buildings associated with them were dedicated during the first three years of their term, and the few items dedicated in their last year in office must also have been commenced during the Dyarchy, which comes across as the critical period for imperial construction in the study area. The two are mentioned in 17 building inscriptions, while I have deemed 6 additional fragments which are at times associated with them as too uncertain.<sup>470</sup> Their record still represents 30 items in total, a third of the entire cache of dated items from the Diocletianic period and more than half of those that involve imperial representatives. That the large record is an accident of survival, combined with their long tenure, is rejected by Porena, pointing out that other governors who served long

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<sup>470</sup> It should be noted that no fragment that I have rejected either adds or detracts from the pattern produced by the items that I have judged to be secure enough to include.

terms are featured in far fewer inscriptions.<sup>471</sup> The visibility of these two magistrates represents a particular phenomenon, concentrated in a brief period of time.

The question arises whether the initiative should be seen as their own, or if the inscriptions frame the projects as carried out on part of the state. Were these two unusually ambitious men? Or, is their visibility an effect of a removal of imperial restrictions on imperial officials building? Or, did the state implement a restoration program in the area, to alleviate the effects of the “crisis,” as many argue? Another alternative is that the projects were local, and that the texts only mention the two as an honorific formula. The most commonly used criterion for establishing the agent of a building project, that is, funding, is an ambiguous and contested issue. Rather than treating it first, I will begin with reviewing all other aspects that may help determine who set up these inscriptions, and what they represented to contemporary audiences. As a guide, I will use conclusions drawn from the examination of epigraphic conventions for local and imperial construction in the previous two chapters. Only after this will I turn my attention to funding.

A cursory glance suggests that the inscriptions have far more points in common with those commemorating imperial building projects than local, and that the two appear in their official, not private, roles. They usually appear in tandem, which is a good indication that they were featured as officials (unless they were related, which is not the case). Texts that mention them singly are fragmentary, and several have verbs in the plural, which suggests that the other was mentioned, too. Curators appear with them in 3 texts, further strengthening this image. The two appear in a range of roles, as initiators, executors and dedicators of public structures, on occasion

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<sup>471</sup> Porena 2003: 86. Several served for 3 or more years, none producing more than 3 inscriptions, including the otherwise remarkably prolific builder L. Helvius Aelius Dionysius (see above n. 469), in office for 4 years and mentioned in 3 inscriptions, and only as dedicator.

as commanding or initiating construction rather than executing it, as implied by the formulas *iubente* or *per instantiam*, terms that had hitherto appeared only in texts that commemorate imperial projects.<sup>472</sup> When the two are featured as dedicators, it is not on the pattern seen under Marcus and Commodus, when the actual builder was privileged in the inscription. That the old practice was alive is clear from the items raised by towns in the Northeast during the Tetrarchy, of which many were dedicated by governors presented with the same formulas as in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. The involvement of Aristobulus and Sossianus is described as more active; they tend to also have erected the item dedicated, or performed other tasks connected to the building process.

Otherwise the texts offer little information about the two, which leads to the another criterion for imperial building inscriptions, the no-nonsense presentation of the officials building. Throughout the record their own titles are very brief, and at no point is any previous (or future) position mentioned, but only the current office. This brevity has led to considerable gaps in our knowledge of their careers, even though they are among the most visible of all imperial officials active in Africa. Their very involvement is uncommonly understated, at times described in oblique cases as in a text from *Thagura* which gives the verbs in the passive followed by an ablative of agent.<sup>473</sup> This makes some fragments difficult to resolve, in particular since the two are often presented as only in part responsible, as ordering (*iubente*), initiating (*inchoante*), or

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<sup>472</sup> See chapter III p. 129 for the use of these terms in an imperial context only. Saastamoinen 2008a: 303 accepts these inscriptions as the product of central government but doubts the level of actual involvement. He interprets *per instantiam* as “through the administration of” Lepelley 1979: 61, 242-3 translates it “by the pressing demand of,” and sees it as overriding municipal authority and so a rather strong “imperial” intervention, if milder than *iussu*, a direct command. I have adopted the more conservative translation of Saastamoinen, but am inclined to see in the term more than administration, as was the case during the principate.

<sup>473</sup> *Thagura*, *ILAlg.* 1.1032: ... *restituta et dedicata est Aurel(io) Aristobulo proco(n)s(ule) c(larissimo) v(iro) Macrinio Sossiano l[eg(ato)] c(larissimo) v(iro)*

managing (*per instantiam*), at times in combination, such as at *Mactaris* where Aristobulus ordered, Sossianus coordinated, and a local curator oversaw the project.<sup>474</sup> Saastamoinen, surprised at this low profile, seeing that a governor usually appeared with more flair, a point which makes him doubt the extent of their involvement.<sup>475</sup> But this is precisely the point: embellishments only accompanied an imperial official when honored as a private man – in his official role, he was not presented with much ado. Neither of them appear as patron, or together with family members, at any point. For the *legatus* this is no great surprise – texts that mention *legati* had always framed them in their official role, often together with the emperor – but for the proconsuls this represents a complete departure from established practice. When at all visible, they were mostly so as private men, through statue bases to family members hailed as patrons.

By contrast, the only text that adds any manner of information about the persons of Aristobulus and Sossianus is not a project with which they were involved in any way. The text, which uses them as a temporal formula, was posted by the curator at *Calama*, and gives their year of office (their fourth). It is also unique in applying attributes, if only to Sossianus, likely in honor of his earlier curatorship there which one suspects is the reason that the two are mentioned at all. The attributes are drawn from the vocabulary associated with conduct in office, not with private men and benefactors.<sup>476</sup> The same is the case with the text on a statue base to Aristobulus found at *Lepcis Magna*, which celebrates his *innocentia* and *integritas*, both to be understood as

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<sup>474</sup> The activity of Sossianus is described as *per instantiam*.

<sup>475</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 125. He wants to see the names in the *Thagura* inscription above as a temporal formula because “their role should be more emphasized.” He labors to diminish the impact of the two in a number of cases such as *CIL* 8.20487, *AE* 1903,94 and *CIL* 8.20602, which he claims lack an agent, but he admits that their involvement even in these cases goes beyond simply providing the date.

<sup>476</sup> *CIL* 8.5333a-d: ... *proco[nsulatu quarto insignis Aureli Aristobuli viri clariss(imi) | et ornat[iss]i[m]i provisione gloriosi Macrini Sos[siani viri clarissimi] leg(ati) quarto...*

incorruptibility in office and only applied to magistrates; furthermore he is “vigorously lenient” and “sublimely moderate,” while his *iustitia* is praiseworthy. No acts of generosity are mentioned, no family members, and no *cursus honorum*.<sup>477</sup> No statue bases to Aristobulus or Sossianus have been attested in the study area, either as patrons or officials.<sup>478</sup> In fact, they do not appear as private men in the area in any medium at all, neither through their own efforts nor through family members, clients, or *amici*. Their private persons are shrouded in complete silence, while as officials they are more visible than any of their forebears, which for the proconsuls represents a complete reversal of roles.

This silence is the more remarkable seeing that these two were by no means unknown. Sossianus had served as *curator rei publicae* at *Calama* under Carinus, to whom he was involved in raising a statue.<sup>479</sup> Aristobulus is also a holdover from the previous administration, and a far more important one. He was the praetorian prefect of Carinus and shared the consulate with him in 285, during the war against Diocletian; he is in fact described as the one who secured the empire for Diocletian by declaring for him at Margus.<sup>480</sup> He remained in Diocletian’s favor and

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<sup>477</sup> The one departure from the impersonal norm is the title of perpetual patron, which was routinely attributed to governors and legates by all major towns in Tripolitania and Numidia and which did not represent a particular bond between magistrate and city; see chapter III p. 158, esp. n. 385. *IRT. 522: [---] | [T(ito) Cl]audio A[ur(elio) Aristobulo] | [v(iro) c(larissimo)] proconsuli pr[ovinc]iae | [Af]ricae omnium virtutum | viro innocentis integri/tatis vi<g=C>ratae lenitatis | sublimis moderationis | lauda<b=V>ilis iustitiae | Lepcimagnenses ex de|creto ordinis patrono| perpetuo.*

<sup>478</sup> A fragment from *Saltus Massipiani (IIAfr. 90)* which Lepelley included among the building inscriptions may be the base of a statue to Aristobulus, and if so, the only one from my region. It features him as active in connection with an unnamed project and has been included in my sample for that reason.

<sup>479</sup> *CIL* 08.5332. His name does not betray whether he was himself of African origin or not.

<sup>480</sup> Carinus, a seasoned general, had the upper hand in the battle and would possibly have prevailed over Diocletian, who was less a soldier than an administrator. When his praetorian prefect abandoned him, so, it seems, did the soldiers; Carinus was assassinated. The event is

continued as consul with him (as the second to last ever to share a consulate with an emperor), proceeding after his long proconsulate to serve as prefect of the city of Rome from June 295 to February 296. We know nothing of his career before the battle of the Margus, but he was clearly not of the usual Italian senatorial mold, seeing that he was the first praetorian prefect to become proconsul of Africa.<sup>481</sup> He must be considered one of Diocletian's closest henchmen, and among those in longest service to him, perhaps longer even than Maximian. Between the two, thus, Aristobulus and Sossianus combined close knowledge of the area with close ties to the emperors. Add to this that they were in a good position to transfer information from the previous administration, and that they served remarkably long terms.<sup>482</sup> They thus cut large figures on both the local scene and the global, in sharp contrast to their low profile in the epigraphic record. There is every reason to believe that they developed personal connections in the province, but if so they are not displayed or exploited, either by themselves or by locals.

The only other imperial officials attested in the material as builders are *curatores rei publicae*, whose activities as we have seen could straddle the spheres of private and official, and who were often deeply enmeshed with local society. Moreover, under Diocletian a fair number of them appear to be of the new kind, risen from the ranks of the municipality to which they are assigned, making it still more difficult to tell in which capacity they are active. This is the case for a curator at *Sabzia*, who is also *flamen* of this town and whose involvement should likely not

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narrated by Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 39.11-16 who describes it as pivotal in that Diocletian began his reign with clemency. Porena suggests that Aristobulus was himself an administrator rather than a general. Porena 2003 pp. 79-89.

<sup>481</sup> Porena 2003: 78 postulates an equestrian origin, which is likely.

<sup>482</sup> The long proconsular term was apparently deemed a success since it was repeated with L Aelius Helvius Dionysius, who like Aristobulus continued to become urban prefect. The predecessor of Aristobulus held the post for at least two years.



be seen as imperial. A borderline case is that of a curator at *Calama* who proudly presents himself as *civis*, and the funding supplement suggests he paid for the project personally, although admittedly this is an emendation. By contrast, at *Bulla Regia* the curator *L. Munatius Sabinus* appears to be featured as an official – his titles (although a senator) are as brief as possible, and the project is funded not by him but by the city.<sup>483</sup> The criterion applied by Lucas, to see the task as carried out on part of the state if only given as *curante*, determines their activities as imperial in most cases, and in some they appear in tandem with Aristobulus and Sossianus.<sup>484</sup>

The imperial titles used by the curator at *Bulla Regia* are as succinct, which is another typical feature of imperial building projects. The same goes for the inscriptions that feature Aristobulus and Sossianus in active roles, which also use brief, no-nonsense imperial titles. Although most texts are fragmentary, two are in good enough shape to allow us to judge:

*Beatissimo saeculo dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) [[Diocletiani]] et [[Maximiani]] Augg(ustorum) | [ae]dem dei Herculis cum porticibus suis nimia vetus | [tate] dilabsam et per annos plurimos intermissam iubente T. Cl(audio) | [Aurel]io Aristobulo proco(n)s(ule) per instantiam C. Macrini Sossiani v(iri) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ati) N(umidia) idem | proco(n)s(ul) cum eodem leg(ato) suo dedicavit.*<sup>485</sup>

<sup>483</sup> *Sabzia* (CIL 8.23123), *Calama* (CIL 8.5290). The *Bulla Regia* text (CIL 8.25520) is far less embellished than the other two: *Pro salute dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Imp(eratorum) Diocletiani et | Maximiani Augg(ustorum) aedes publicas vetus | tate conlapsas cameris picturis et marmori | bus L. Munatius Sabinus v(iri) c(larissimus) curator | rei publicae pecunia publica perfecit et | dedi[cavit].*

<sup>484</sup> See chapter III p. 177. Some examples of the task given as *curante*: *Segermes*, CIL 8.906; *Thugga*, CIL 8.26566-7; CIL 8.26472; *Mactaris*, CIL 8.624+23413+AE 1946.119 (cf. CIL 8.608); *Mididi*, CIL 8.11774; CIL 8.608; AE 2000.1661.

<sup>485</sup> *ILAlg.* 1.2048, *Madauros*: “In the most blessed age of our lords Diocletian and Maximian Augusti, on the order of T. Cl. Aurelius Aristobulus proconsul and through the administration of C. Macrinus Sossianus, *clarissimus vir*, consular legate of Numidia, a shrine to the god Hercules with its porticoes that had collapsed from too great age and neglected through many years was dedicated by the same proconsul with his legate.”

*Pro salute dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum) Diocletiani et Maximiani Aug(ustorum) | cella unctuarua quae per seriem annorum in usu non fuisset saeculo | eorum restituta et dedicata est Aurel(io) Aristobulo proco(n)s(ule) c(larissimo) v(iro) Macrinio Sossiano l[eg(ato)] c(larissimo) v(iro).*<sup>486</sup>

Apart from the “beatitude formula” in the first text, an element that will be discussed further below, the actual titles are short and to the point, as they appear to be in the more fragmentary inscriptions as well. This conforms to the general tendency that “imperial” inscriptions employed very short imperial titles. Civic and private building inscriptions, on the other hand, used the longest and most ornate versions available, and the titles could swell out to take over the major part of the inscription. The reign of Diocletian is no exception.<sup>487</sup> An example that follows entirely the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. conventions for dedications by locals comes from *Thugga*:

*[P]ro salute [dd(ominorum) nn(ostrorum)] | Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) C. Aur[eli Valeri] Diocletiani pii fel(icis) Aug(usti) p(ontificis) m(aximi) [trib(unicia) pot(estate) XV co(n)s(ulis) VI des(ignati) VII et] | Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M. Au[reli Valeri] Maximiani pii fel(icis) Au[g(usti) p(ontificis) m(aximi) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XIII] co(n)s(ulis) V d[es(ignati) VI et] | Flavi Vale[ri] Consta[n]ti no[bilissi]mi Cae[s(aris) trib(unicia) pot(estate) VI] co(n)s(ulis) I[I et] | Galeri Valeri Maximiani [n]obilissimi Cae[s(aris) trib(unicia) pot(estate) VI] co(n)s(ulis) II] | porticius (!) templi deum Matri[s r]es p(ublica) col(oniae) Thugg(ensium) s[umptu suo] | perfecit et dedicavit [[pro[co]nsulatu Ael[i Helvi Dionysi]]].*<sup>488</sup>

<sup>486</sup> *ILAlg.* 1.1032, *Thagura*: “For the health of our lords Diocletian and Maximian Augusti an anointment room which for a succession of years had not been in use has been restored and dedicated in their era by Aurelius Aristobulus, proconsul, *clarissimus vir*, and Macrinus Sossianus, legate, *clarissimus vir*.”

<sup>487</sup> Porena 2003: 116-8, 120 notes the freedom exercised by locals in applying *cognomina* to Diocletian and his co-rulers, and gives a long row of quite fanciful examples. The African texts all use standard titles, but the idea to raise a shrine to the *Gens Valeria* (*AE* 2003.2010) is similar to the tendency noted by Porena, and should be attributed to local minds, not central policy.

<sup>488</sup> *CIL* 8.1489: “For the health of our lords the Emperors Caesars C. Aurelius Valerius Diocletian, pious and blessed Augustus, pontifex maximus, 15 times tribune, 6 times consul, designated for his seventh, and M. Aurelius Valerius Maximian, pious and blessed Augustus, pontifex maximus, 14 times tribune, 5 times consul, designated for his sixth, and Fl. Valerius Constantius, the most noble Caesar, 6 times tribune, twice consul, and Galerius Valerius

The pompous titles make up almost all of the text, in contrast to the texts featuring Aristobulus and Sossianus which use the bare minimum of words: *Diocletiani et Maximiani Augustorum*.

Thus far, the texts suggest that the projects should be seen as imperial, at least in part. As for the objects built, the norm for imperial construction was to be concerned with infrastructure, but it is immediately obvious that this is not the case: there is not a single such instance among them. Instead, all (where it is possible to tell) belong to the type of urban amenities which significantly raised the profile of a town: civic accoutrements and entertainment buildings. The list provided by Lactantius of what manner of buildings Diocletian was so busy constructing begin with *basilicae* and *circus*, which conforms well with the objects in evidence here.<sup>489</sup> Baths are built or restored at *Thagura* and *Thubursicu Numidarum* in the West, and likely also at *Civitas A...* in Byzacena where a fragment was retrieved from the fountain of a bath. At *Mididi*, a curia was built according to one text, a forum and an arch according to another. The text from *Mactaris* is associated with the so-called schola of the *iuvenes*; in any case a public structure in the monumental center of town. To this should be added the blanket restoration of the *aedes publicas* by the curator at *Bulla Regia*. Even a temple was restored, the municipal oeuvre par excellence. They built not between but in towns, and focused on what is the most prestigious, an image strengthened further if we accept Lepelley's attribution to Aristobulus of the theatre works

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Maximianus, most noble Caesar, 6 times tribune, twice consul, the *respublica* of the colony of the Thuggans raised the portico of the temple of the Mother of the Gods out of their own money and dedicated it in the proconsulate of Aelius Helvius Dionysius."

<sup>489</sup> The following entry (*armorum fabricae*) is represented by a military weaving mill at Carthage mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The final items listed, *hic uxori domus*, *hic filiae*, are likely included to tarnish the record by inserting private projects among the public. Lactantius, *De mort.* 7.9.

attested for the period at *Theveste* and the restoration of the aqueduct at *Thysdrus*, both of which I deem highly likely to be correct.<sup>490</sup>

If this is novel for imperial construction, it also differs from the practices of local builders, at least those that published their works through stone inscriptions. That these conventions were still alive is clear from the many texts treated above, which present the works of local builders. Apart from the temple, which was dedicated to Hercules and likely informed by the connection of this deity to Maximian, the projects rather resemble those undertaken by senatorial patrons, but which were not, as far as we know, broadcast through inscriptions. Both Lepelley and Porena argue that Aristobulus and Sossianus undertook a broad scale restoration program in the wake of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. crisis, and suggest that their long appointments were specifically aimed at carrying this out.<sup>491</sup> This may well be, but a few circumstances should be kept in mind. Apart from the problems accruing to interpretations of the crisis and its effects on public construction, one may note the considerable glamour and wide popular appeal of the structures involved in the program, if that is indeed the correct term. None of the projects are described as emergency operations, and some buildings are raised *ex novo*. Furthermore, as we shall see, they appear in areas where there was little to renew, as there was little by way of earlier building epigraphy.

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<sup>490</sup> The aqueduct is massive, 12 km long, and gives no hint of its date. See Cintas 1956.

<sup>491</sup> Porena 2003: 86-7. Due to his closeness to the emperors, Aristobulus was charged with a unitary program in a province of crucial importance. So also Rebuffat 1992: 376, taking the nomination of Aristobulus and his colleague *Aurelius Litua* in Mauretania Caesariensis as a sign that Diocletian took the situation there seriously. Lepelley 1979: 85: “Il est vraisemblable qu'Aristobulus avait reçu de l'autorité impériale le mandat de mener à bien la restauration générale des villes de Proconsulaire; ceci expliquerait la durée inhabituelle de sa fonction.”

## *Formulas*

A possibility to be considered is that the mention of Aristobulus and Sossianus was a formula, essentially devoid of meaning.<sup>492</sup> Although building inscriptions were certainly repetitive and contained honorific elements, there are, I believe, several arguments that speak against this, beyond the explicit mentions of their involvement. Honorific formulas were ornate, and included the type of information that these did not, such as career details or attributes, the one exception from *Calama* representing precisely such an honorific context. Furthermore, there is no gradual development of which these texts could be a stage; there is no preceding practice of naming a governor the builder of a structure that was actually raised by a town or a private man. The texts in fact have little in common with the genres associated with local builders, even though we have seen that these practices were not only surviving intact but also energetically pursued, at the same moment in time and also in the same areas. Furthermore, some of the inscriptions feature identical formulas applied in separate locations, which was not otherwise the norm. Although building inscriptions tended to include the same elements, they were never identical. All towns had their local variants, emulating what was already posted in their public spaces, and even within a single town no two are alike.<sup>493</sup> It is highly improbable that the recurring formulas applied in the Diocletianic inscriptions, some of them quite novel, appeared spontaneously, against local practices, at the same time, in more than one location. Besides showing that the texts were conceived at a higher level than the local, this also highlights their low specificity

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<sup>492</sup> Oshimizu 2012: 194 sees several of the appearances of Aristobulus and Sossianus (if not all) as locals including their names for honorific purposes, seeing their high standing.

<sup>493</sup> Saastamoinen 2008b: 246-248 points out that one of the more surprising aspects of building inscriptions is how variable they are, even when including the same elements in the same order. Even the most basic building inscriptions were never worded by the formulaic praxis used for funerary monuments, i.e., filling in blanks.

compared to the conventions of elite building epigraphy. While inscriptions commemorating the projects of towns or private men emphasized their ties to the locality either by itemizing previous activity and offices held in the *patria*, parading its titles, or by displaying a patronage relation to it, the texts that describe the activities of Aristobulus and Sossianus (as far as can be told) barely mention the towns at all but repeat standard formulas, applied in regional, not local fashion.

That the texts belong to the imperial genre is suggested not only by the application but also the content of the formulas, which suggest an aims and audiences as wide as the objects they framed. Two elements stand out, the frequent “beatitude formulas,” that is, appeals to the happiness of the times, followed by the names of the emperors in genitive, which begin most of the inscriptions that involve imperial officials in active roles, and “moral formulas,” which stress the virtues and competence of the emperors. The idea that these represent loyalty statements by locals that had by then become routine is incorrect; they have no precedents in the inscriptions of local builders. Their application before Diocletian is, in fact, limited and highly specific, and although common in the 4<sup>th</sup> c., they have no previous history in the area.<sup>494</sup>

Beatitude formulas in the Diocletianic dossier come in several varieties: *beatissimo saeculo* (*Madauros, Cuttilula*); *felicissimo saeculo* (*Mactaris, Mididi, Vaga*); probably also by imperial agents are two items including *florentissimo saeculo* (*Ammaedara, Musti*).<sup>495</sup> The earliest inscription in the empire to include a beatitude formula dates to Septimius Severus and sons, to

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<sup>494</sup> So e.g. Winter 1990: 102, 107, seeing in them clichés void of content, and Mrozewicz 1980: 109-110, who associates beatitude formulas with real sentiments of happiness and enthusiasm.

<sup>495</sup> The beatitude formula is another argument in favor of attributing the theatre works at *Ammaedara* to imperial representatives, as nearly all examples from any time were associated with imperial projects. The contemporary private building inscription from the same town begins with *dd(ominis) nn(ostris)*. Most are African, but a comparandum can be found at Salamis where bases by the governor to the Tetrarchic caesars includes *laetitiae publicae caerimoniarumque*. Mitford, T. 1974. *Inscriptions of Salamis*. Nicosia, nos. 130-1.

whom a governor and legate dedicated in the shrine of the standards at *Novae* (Svishtov) on the Danube, applying the formula *felicissimis temporibus*.<sup>496</sup> A contemporary example from the likewise Danubian garrison town *Tyras* (Belgorod-Dnestrovsky) includes the phrase *tempori bono*. A military context is notable also in the few later examples, all African. One comes from the Numidian border post *Zarai*, another from *Lambaesis*, dating to Maximinus Thrax and Carinus respectively.<sup>497</sup> *Zarai* is a veteran settlement, and a connection to urbanistic projects supported by the state is clear also in the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. texts mentioned in the previous chapter, associated with *vici* on imperial estates en route to become proper towns. They all include beatitude formulas in some form, such as *indulgentia novi saeculi* in the text from *Lemellef* (Bordj Rhedir) which, with obvious pride in having outgrown them, describes how the governor enlarged the city walls.<sup>498</sup>

These formulas are unknown in contemporary honorifics, but instead have their origins in the rhetoric of imperial administration.<sup>499</sup> Similar appeals to a golden age appear frequently on imperial coinage, the earliest under Vespasian (*felicitas publica*, *RIC* 715), while temporal formulas appear from Pius onward (*temporum felicitas*, *RIC* 857). They are particularly common

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<sup>496</sup> *AE* 1993.1362 = *ILBulg.* 268c = *ILNovae* 28, 46-7. For an overview and catalogue of examples, Mrozewicz 1980; further notes and bibliography in Salomies 1994: 85-6, esp. n. 82.

<sup>497</sup> *Zarai* (*CIL* 8.4515): *florentissimo saeculo*; *Lambaesis* (*AE* 1989.869): *felicissimo ac florentissimo saeculo*.

<sup>498</sup> See chapter III p. 138. They date from Severus Alexander to Philip. The earlier begin with *infatigabili indulgentia*, the Philippic with *felicissimis temporibus*. Also at *Lemellef* the governor restored the aqueduct, with unusually flowery phrases that allude to the benefit of the population. *Lemellef* was still an imperial estate under Septimius Severus and Caracalla (*CIL* 8.8808, *coloni Lemellefenses*). On the development from estate to town, Kehoe 1988: 212.

<sup>499</sup> They were used in *senatusconsulta* already in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. Salomies 1994: 85-6, esp. n. 82 mentions *senatusconsulta de aedificiis* of 46 and 56 including the phrase *felicitas saeculi instantis*, and an edict by Nerva quoted by Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 1058.7 appealing to *felicitas temporibus*. Trajan expresses something similar, *nec nostri saeculi est*, in *Ep.* 10.97.2.



Fig. 11. *RIC* III.857. The coinage of Antoninus Pius exploited *felicitas*, connecting it to abundance and stable succession by placing imperial children in the *cornucopia*.



Fig. 12. *RIC* VI.31, minted at Antioch, with the legend *providentia Aug(ustorum)*.



Fig. 13. *RIC* VI.27, minted at Rome, with the legend *virtus militum*. Images wildwind.com.



under Septimius Severus, who introduced *felicitas saeculi* (e.g. *RIC* 175, 181) while Caracalla added *imperii felicitas* (*RIC* 9). The most original is a Philippic creation, *spes felicitis orbis* (*RIC* 70, 73). They entered the language of inscriptions only later and in limited fashion, as it seems always closely tied to the imperial administration. The types of inscriptions found in my area did not apply them at all until the arrival of Aristobulus. From then on, a few locals do use them, but even until the late 4<sup>th</sup> c., beatitude formulas are mainly used by governors, when building.<sup>500</sup>

Private and civic inscriptions continued to apply the *pro salute* formula or *dd(ominis) nn(ostris)*, at times *magnis et invictis*, none of which were in any way innovative but part of the standard epigraphic toolbox since the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. Beatitude formulas differ from these not only in who applied them, but also in how they framed the role of the emperor in relation to the building projects: instead of being dedicated *to* emperors, they present them as erected *by way of* emperors, whose bountiful tenure was a prerequisite for the projects to materialize. They have been interpreted as a sign of “crisis,” as propaganda meant to gloss over a bleak reality, but they are surely used in a more general sense, and moreover were conceived far earlier, at a time when such explanations do not make sense.<sup>501</sup> It is likewise hard to explain why, if so, they should become frequent from the reign of Diocletian and through the 4<sup>th</sup> c., when the areas where they appear arguably had their strongest economic development of the entire Roman period.

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<sup>500</sup> Kotula 1985: 257-9 notes that most involve governors and calls them propaganda. According to Mrozewicz 1980: 110, all examples but 4 (of 43) come from public construction. The only potentially private example that dates to Diocletian comes from *Calama* (*CIL* 8.5333a-d), mentioning a very large sum willed for the construction of an Apollo temple by a private woman, and also other construction activities that are unfortunately lost due to the fragmentary state of the inscription. So is the actual builder, who thus may be the curator or some other imperial official, which is rather suggested by the very fact that the text begins with *saeculo beatissimo*.

<sup>501</sup> So Saastamoinen 2008a: 73, seeing them as signs rather of unhappiness, while Février 1987: 183, rejected such a reading.

The phrases that I have termed “moral formulas” describe the personal qualities of the emperors, applied in the service of the general good. They emphasize the role of the emperors as providers of security and prosperity, and, like the beatitude formulas, have been treated as an expression of “crisis,” or in this case, of the release from it, posted by enthusiastic locals.<sup>502</sup> I have already argued that the texts were in all likelihood authored by the governor or his staff, and Saastamoinen goes further and describes them as imperial propaganda, as did Kotula.<sup>503</sup> All texts that feature them also include beatitude formulas. The most complete inscriptions include the phrase *quorum virtute ac providentia omnia in melius reformantur*, which is unique to this administration. Moral formulas do not become standard; there is only one comparable later example, in which the names of Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian are followed by the subclause *quorum clementia ac remissione orbem suum augeri cottidie videmus*.<sup>504</sup> Personal qualities were not as a rule expressed in dedications to emperors even when imperial titulature reached its most excessive proportions under Septimius Severus and Caracalla, nor were they used for projects presented as by the emperors themselves. Exceptions exist; the earliest is a text from Mauretania

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<sup>502</sup> So Lepelley 1979: 87. The closest parallel (of sorts) is contemporary. A text referring to the restoration of the legionary aqueduct at *Lambaesis* (*CIL*. 8.2572) by Diocletian and Maximian (in the nominative), describes them as *...ac restituto|res et propagatores | orbis sui....*

<sup>503</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 75 came to the same conclusion, against Warmington 1954: 31 and Lepelley 1981: 297, 433, who both see the formula as genuine enthusiasm on the part of grateful subjects: “I find it odd that people would have expressed their spontaneous gratitude using exactly the same phrase in four different inscriptions found at two different sites. It seems more plausible that the phrase was a piece of imperial propaganda coined - or at least propagated - by Aristobulus himself who was recorded as the dedicator in these four inscriptions.” Kotula 1985: 259-60 calls both beatitude and moral formulas propaganda, clichés worded after an established official model. On the improbability that moral formulas were conceived in local shops, Saastamoinen 2008b, *passim*. The workshops were not innovative; any originality was the addition of the commissioner. The uniformity and novelty of the formulas suggests application from above, while the texts posted by locals in the Northeast are more in line with what is to be expected from local shops – if slightly more flowery than before, they present no major changes.

<sup>504</sup> *ILPBardo* 408 from 374 at *Biracsaccar*.

Caesariensis describing Septimius Severus and Caracalla as *propagatores imperi*, building a winter camp for the *III Sygambrorum*.<sup>505</sup> As with beatitude formulas, such forerunners as exist appear in an imperial context, often associated with the army. The milestones from the reign of Maximinus Thrax claim that roads were restored for the benefit of *commeantibus*, a task undertaken *pro infatigabili providentia* of the emperor.<sup>506</sup> This phrase finds an echo at *Tiddis* in Numidia where an aqueduct was restored “for the health of the people” by the curator of the metropolis Cirta, *ex indulgentia providentiaque* of Decius.<sup>507</sup> Phrases that allude to the great benefit of imperial projects are *securitati provincialium suorum*, for which walls were built at Auzia by Commodus, while a fort at El Kantara was built *ad salutem commeantibus*, on the order of the legate, a phrase reminiscent of the milestones.

These examples are few, and neither is a close match with the Diocletianic phrases, but I do believe they can be said to form a category, especially seeing the complete absence of such a rhetoric from the building epigraphy of locals. All examples are imperial, and not infrequently presented as by the emperors themselves. The virtues, even when the item is built by a governor or curator, are always those of the emperors, through whose care for the realm the projects came to be. These virtues merit a closer look. To begin with *virtus* itself, it is not a common element in either honorifics or building epigraphy, and I have not found any item that predates Diocletian. The one previous appearance of the word is in a long text dating to Severus Alexander from the camp at *Gholaia*, which frequently refers to the *virtus* of the soldiers of the *III Augusta*. This

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<sup>505</sup> *AE* 1995.1790, *Tatilti*. For the excessive titulature of the two, see chapter III p. 152. Severus also built army installations at two other locations *pro pace provinciae*.

<sup>506</sup> See chapter III p. 137. E.g. *AE* 2003.1972, *AE* 2002.1663, *IL Afr.* 66, *CIL* 8.10021.

<sup>507</sup> *IL Alg.* 2.3596. The names of Decius and Hostilianus were erased and replaced by Gallus and Volusianus. The aqueduct at *Lemellef* is dedicated with a similar appeal to its utility, recording how the population was suffering from the lack of water before the governor restored it.

underlines the martial associations of the word, and the Diocletianic texts use it as a shorthand for the military excellence of the emperors, through which they guarantee the happiness of the realm. It also appears in dedications to Constantius and Galerius as caesars, paired with *pietas*.<sup>508</sup> If *virtus* is unknown in earlier honorific formulas, *providentia* does appear before Diocletian, if only in the two examples above. Both are infrastructural projects, and present the emperor as directly responsible. The term seems to have been a favorite of the administration of Diocletian, used also in an inscription describing the restoration of the quays of the Tiber by Diocletian and Maximian, presented (in the nominative) as *providentissimi*, a virtue reserved for emperors.<sup>509</sup> Likewise, the Antonine baths at Nicomedia are described on a statue to Diocletian to have been enlarged on the order of the *providentia* of the emperor, from his own money, a type of information which we have seen is rarely given in a building inscription.<sup>510</sup>

Both *virtus* and *providentia* may be new to building epigraphy, but they were common enough on imperial coinage already from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. Representations of the goddess *Virtus* are always martial, while *Providentia* appears together with modius and cornucopia. In 294 they begin to appear as a pair, in a silver series celebrating Diocletian's Sarmatian victory and attested at mints both in the East and West, clearly not the invention of a local minter but centrally

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<sup>508</sup> *Virtus* and *pietas* in honorifics to the *caesares* on an arch at Thugga; *CIL* 8.26566-7; *ILAfr.* 532. A statue to a procurator at Ksibat in the area of *Thysdrus*, dating to the Tetrarchy, hails him for *omnium virtutum*: *CIL* 8.11105. The same expression is used for a *curator rei publicae* at *Sufetula*, but the inscription is not dated: *CIL* 8.11332.

<sup>509</sup> *CIL* 6.744, also dating to the Dyarchy. Cr  t   2010: 203-5 lists *providentia* among epithets used not only for emperors but also for imperial officials, if only on occasion and as late as 379, to *Anicius Auchenius Bassus* proconsul of Campania, at Naples. It is never used for private men.

<sup>510</sup> *CIL* 3.324: *Perpetu[o] Imp(eratori) [d(omino) n(ostro)] | C(aio) Aur(elio) Val(erio) Diocletian[o] | P(io) F(elici) Aug(usto) cuius pr[o]videntia etiam | lavacrum ther|marum Ant[o]ni|niarum fundi|tus eversum sua | pecunia amplifi|catum p[o]pul[o] suo | exhiberi iussit.*

promulgated.<sup>511</sup> The coins all feature the emperors sacrificing in front of a wall gate, interpreted as an army camp, but the image can just as well represent a town, according to the iconography for cities that was developing in contemporary art. Though the legend is quite specific, the ensemble can also be taken generally as describing the martial valor, piety, and sense of duty of the emperors as the guarantee for the viability of the town, used as a metaphor for civilized Roman existence. That a wider sense of the two virtues than the strictly martial is likely to have been in play seems clear from their use on civic buildings, and I would suggest that *providentia* and *virtus* be interpreted as “commitment” and “competence” – aimed at demonstrating that the government assumed active responsibility for the realm, and had the strength to back it up.

The phrase *omnia in melius reformantur*, finally, obviously exploits the goodwill of restoration and renewal, and similar expressions appear in other imperial building inscriptions from Diocletian onward. Items dating to the tenure of Aristobulus and Sossianus come from *Aqua Frigida* in Mauretania Caesariensis, where the governor restored and *ad meliorem faciem reformavit* the centenarium.<sup>512</sup> The aqueduct of the legion at *Lambaesis* is restored *ad meliorem statum*, while that of the civil town is restored *in melius reformatum ad integritatem*, both by Diocletian and Maximian in the nominative.<sup>513</sup> The context for the phrases as far as can be told remains predominantly imperial until the late 4<sup>th</sup> c., usually paired with beatitude formulas.<sup>514</sup>

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<sup>511</sup> E.g. Rome *RIC* VI.5-9 (gold), 10-33, 34-42; Siscia *RIC* VI.33-48, 54-62. Eastern: Nicomedia *RIC* VI.18-20, 21-23, 24-26; Alexandria *RIC* VI.7-9; Cyzicus *RIC* VI.4-6; Heraclea *RIC* VI.1-4, 5-11. All date to 294-5 and feature the emperors sacrificing in front of a turreted wall.

<sup>512</sup> *CIL* 8.20215.

<sup>513</sup> *CIL* 8.2660; *CIL* 8. 2572. Slightly later are *novam faciem* at *Cuicul* (295) and *ad pristinam statum reformavit* at *Albulae* in Mauretania Caesariensis (299).

<sup>514</sup> I have found one undated exception in the phrase *addito cultu meliori* applied for the restoration of a Capitulum at *Utica* (*CIL* 8.1183), and another undated item by a curator at *Vallis* which includes *in meliorem cultum* (*CIL* 8.1281). Two texts from Carthage include variants, but

The one similar occurrence in the private sphere comes from honorifics: the statue to the *curator rei publicae* at *Pupput* under Probus who restored public structures *meliore cultu*, a text which has been brought forth as exceptional several times already.<sup>515</sup> The verb *reformare* in the context of construction appears to be introduced during the reign of Diocletian, and is distinct from restoration, used alongside it and with a meaning that goes beyond it: the items are not just patched up but transformed into something better than their original state. *Omnia* gives it the widest sense possible: everything and everyone is affected.<sup>516</sup>

One may note the absence of certain elements that are often discussed as pervasive in the self-presentation of the Diocletianic government. Other than the vague *virtus*, no text mentions military matters or security, as imperial inscriptions since Commodus had often done (and which the Diocletianic texts from *Rapidum* and *Sitifis*, far to the west of the study area, do).<sup>517</sup> Nor does any text allude to the divinity of the rulers, an element which many scholars argue was becoming an essential element of imperial display at the time.<sup>518</sup> The texts mention no deities, and none

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are too fragmentary to date or decipher; one involves a curator, likely the same man who curated the item at *Utica*, an otherwise unknown *Silius Tertullus* (*CIL* 8.12540, also *AE* 1917/18.102).

<sup>515</sup> *Pupput*, *CIL* 8.24095. Similar formulas appear on four undated fragments that may plausibly date to the reign of Diocletian, or later: at Carthage, *in meliorem speciem reformavit* (*CIL* 8.12540); *in meliorem faciem reformavit* (*AE* 1917/18.102); at *Utica*, *cultu meliori... reformavit* (*CIL* 8.1183); *Vallis*, *meliozem cultum* (*CIL* 8.1281). The Carthage fragments conform most closely to the dated Diocletianic examples, while the other two more likely date to the 4<sup>th</sup> c.

<sup>516</sup> Saastamoinen 2008a: 74 takes the phrase to refer specifically to construction, only possible during blessed reigns. Universality is pervasive in the rhetoric of the Diocletianic administration, as seen also in the adoption of *Genius Populi Romani* as symbol on the new currency. This theme will be discussed further in chapter V on the framing of the reforms.

<sup>517</sup> E.g. *Rapidum* (*CIL* 8.20836): ...*ante plurima tempora rebellium | incursione captum ac dirutum a<d> pristinum statum | a fundamentis restituerunt*. ...

<sup>518</sup> As does for instance Franz Kolb, 2001 and 2004.

includes the titles *Herculius* or *Iovius*.<sup>519</sup> By contrast, some texts posted by locals hail the emperors in words that approximate the divine, such as the temple to *Gens Valeria* raised by the city of *Thignica*, which was entirely the invention of locals.<sup>520</sup> The tendency for locals to be more excessive in the application of imperial titles is general, and predates Diocletian; for instance, Septimius Severus was honored as *deus*, also on the initiative of locals.<sup>521</sup> No such words were used in texts composed by imperial officials. What formed the basis of the emperors' ability to care for the realm was not so much their association with the divine realm, as their *providentia* and *virtus*, their sense of responsibility and military excellence – very human virtues.

### *Geographical distribution*

Another argument for seeing an imperial initiative behind at least some of the inscriptions is the sheer scope of the phenomenon. The somewhat spotty pattern is misleading; in fact, in the West and South, building inscriptions associated with Aristobulus and/or Sossianus were posted in more blanket fashion than a first glance suggests. These two regions show clusters on the Tipasa plain and on the High Tell, where several small townships have produced fragments that mention them as active. A number of communities also come into view on the High Steppe. Overall, the

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<sup>519</sup> That the Herculan and Iovian titles were adopted already during the Dyarchy is clear from inscriptions from Rome; *CIL* 6.255-6.

<sup>520</sup> *Thignica*, *CIL* 8.1411. see above n. 472 for the license showed by locals in honoring the Tetrarchic emperors (Porena). Maresch 2006 underlines how such epithets formed but a slight part of the Diocletianic titulature in documents, where the Severan *αἰώνιος* and *θειότατος* were dismissed for *θεοφιλέστατος*, used by Elagabalus, Thrax and Decius.

<sup>521</sup> *Calama* *CIL* 8.5329, calling him *deus noster*. The often quoted inscriptions from Salmanaj in Macedonia (*CIL* 3.710) and *Colossae* (Khonos) in Asia Minor (*AE* 1940.182) which describe Diocletian and Maximian as *Dis Geniti* are unique, and according to Salomies 1994: 94 inspired by Vergil (*Aeneid* 9.642). As the phrases on African imperial statue bases, this honorific formula was likely the product of local minds.

impression is of an effort specifically aimed at certain areas, but the record must be understood against epigraphic practices and retrieval patterns generally. The Sahel is at all times silent in terms of epigraphy. The few undated fragments from this area in fact appear to be of a late date, and several have been associated with Diocletian, if rather tenuously (except, as mentioned, in the case of *Thysdrus*).<sup>522</sup> The important towns *Capsa*, *Sicca Veneria* and *Hippo Regius* have little or no building epigraphy of any era, and absence from them does not signify.<sup>523</sup>

The one area empty of imperial activity where this cannot be put down to a general lack of epigraphy is the Northeast, a striking pattern that corresponds exactly to that of contemporary construction by locals. No single fragment associated with Aristobulus or Sossianus has been found anywhere in the Northeast. It should be noted that this area at all times produced the vast majority of inscriptions, and furthermore, that the tenure of Aristobulus and Sossianus occurred before the province divisions took place – the phenomenon cannot thus be explained with the differing practices of separate provincial administrations. In an attempt to offset imbalances in the record and better understand the distribution patterns for different areas, I calculated how many of the locations which feature more than 2 and 3 dated building inscriptions had at least one dateable to Diocletian, by any builder. The result for the West and Byzacena was that out of 11 locations with more than 3 dateable items, 10 featured a Diocletianic text, while out of 18 locations with more than 2, the corresponding number was 15. In the Northeast, out of 12 locations with more than 3 dated items, 4 had a text dated to Diocletian, while this was true of only 6 out of 20 locations with more than 2 dated inscriptions. This demonstrates that virtually

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<sup>522</sup> *AE* 1987.1028, accepted as theirs by Lepelley.

<sup>523</sup> Two undated items from *Sicca Veneria*, unclear whether building inscriptions or imperial statues, are highly likely to be of Diocletianic date. See below p. 284.



all of the West or Byzacena where we have any means by which to judge produced building epigraphy under Diocletian. The items associated with imperial magistrates are spread evenly among them, and if the likely attributions to government agents of the texts from *Thysdrus*, *Theveste* and *Ammaedara* are accepted, their penetration of the area becomes deeper still. Even without these, the inscriptions featuring imperial officials show remarkable and unprecedented pervasiveness, appearing not only at regional centres but also at some very minor communities.

It also shows clearly that the Northeast and the periphery were not subjected to the same treatment, an impression that is not an accident of the material.<sup>524</sup> Furthermore, a closer look at the record reveals that such visibility as other imperial officials have in the area is not of the same kind as in the periphery, but far more indirect. The only texts that show any involvement on their part at all are three texts that feature Tetrarchic governors as dedicators of objects raised by towns, entirely on the 2nd c. pattern (*Agbia*, *Thignica*, *Tichilla*), and two that involve a curator, also as managing projects initiated and executed by towns (an arch and a temple at *Thugga*). The one possible item that may reflect actual involvement with construction is the rededication of a Severan arch at *Vaga* which mentions the proconsul L. Aelius Helvius Dionysius in the ablative, but this may simply be a temporal formula. Imperial authorities are by no means invisible in the Northeastern record – it is clear that they were present, and that they paid attention to construction – but their presence is not strongly articulated. The roles fulfilled are ceremonial, and the initiative is in every instance presented as that of locals. The two areas

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<sup>524</sup> Some Northeastern towns have produced large caches of building inscriptions, yet have no Diocletianic texts. Among them are *Thuburbo Maius* with 13 dated items, *Uchi Maius* with 10, *Sua* with 7, and *Numluli* and *Avita Bibba* with 6 each. *Musti* with 14 has 1 Diocletianic item, but its date is not secure.

thus emerge as distinct, with a sharpness that signals that it is deliberate – the absence at the old center should be seen as just as conscious as the strong showing in the periphery.

The initiative of Aristobulus and Sossianus thus displays a certain intentionality, and it is not repeated in the area by later governors, Diocletianic or otherwise. Subsequent proconsuls appear in the background, in the periphery as in the Northeast, but the active roles assumed by these two are never again attested on a comparable scale. A further argument in favor of an imperial initiative behind the inscriptions rather than an attempt of these two to make a mark for themselves, or of the towns to catch some glamour by mentioning them in their own building inscriptions, is the simultaneous appearance of construction of much the same kind in neighboring provinces. *Aurelius Maximianus* in Numidia and *Aurelius Litua* in Mauretania Caesariensis are both attested as undertaking large scale building projects for the emperors, with their own roles understated in similar ways. Nowhere is this activity as evident as in my area, which reinforces the impression that the silence in the Northeast is peculiar, and deliberate.

### *Funding*

A number of features treated so far strongly suggest that the texts associated with Aristobulus and Sossianus belong to the “imperial” sphere: the appearance of the two in tandem, their low profile, the brief imperial titles used, the wide scope and regional application, contemporaneity with imperial projects in neighboring provinces, the types of buildings which do not follow the (still valid) conventions for local builders, and the use of formulas unknown in local epigraphic practices but derived from imperial rhetoric, in particular such as is directed at troops. The final issue to consider is funding, and what it implies for the relation between the state and provincial

towns, a discussion in which the Diocletianic building inscriptions have at times figured. The conclusions drawn vary according to the perspective of the author; for instance, Bransbourg and Oshimizu both refer to the Diocletianic inscriptions but in entirely different ways, to support the conclusions they wish to draw about the situation during the ensuing 4<sup>th</sup> c. Oshimizu strives to describe the Diocletianic government as unintrusive, and dismisses direct involvement of Aristobulus and Sossianus, seeing their projects as independent initiatives by the towns. She also labors to inflate the poor Constantinian record, to make the disappearance of building epigraphy less drastic.<sup>525</sup> Bransbourg, conversely, argues for adverse effects on the towns by Diocletian's tax reform, and thus wants to reject both state construction, which would imply a beneficial state, and construction by towns, which would imply solvent towns. The projects, he argues, were funded by Aristobulus and Sossianus themselves. A more common view is to treat the projects as initiated by the two, but built using the assets of the towns, which is seen as infringement on their autonomy and ultimately damaging their viability.<sup>526</sup>

It is thus of great concern to understand how these projects, presented as imperial, were actually undertaken. This task is made harder by the fact that barely any of the texts mention funding. This comes as no surprise – inscriptions recording the building projects of emperors or imperial officials very rarely did, and usually only when locals collaborated in some form. Lepelley has pointed out the absurdity in assuming that Aristobulus himself paid for this construction spree, the scope of which went far beyond what the two could have footed on their

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<sup>525</sup> Oshimizu 2012, *passim*, esp. 191-9.

<sup>526</sup> Bransbourg 2008. Porena 2003:87 argues that the government had assumed control of the public finances of the towns, with reference to Lepelley 1996b. So also Waldherr 1989: 344-5.

own.<sup>527</sup> Bransbourg’s assertion that they did was based on the absence of formulas testifying to state or local funding. However, no such formulas existed – if anything, the silence on the matter points rather to imperial than local projects.<sup>528</sup> Hints as to who funded them do exist, if ambiguous. Much attention has been accorded an inscription from the small town *Mididi* on the High Tell. The long text gives Aristobulus in the nominative as initiator and executor, Sossianus is presented as involved *per instantiam*, and a curator is mentioned; yet the text ends with *d(ecreto) d(ecurionum) p(ecunia) p(ublica)*, suggesting the project was, at least in part, funded by the city. It may be analogous to the Constantinian item mentioned in the previous chapter, for which Saastamoinen interpreted the funding supplement as referring to the posting of the inscription, but which more plausibly reflects more substantial contributions.<sup>529</sup> That the sweeping restoration of “public structures” at *Bulla Regia* by the *curator rei publicae* was publicly funded is clear, spelled out in full and placed between the name and the verb, affording no doubt that the town contributed to the project. These examples have led to the claim mentioned above, that the activity of Aristobulus and Sossianus represents a new and critical encroachment on municipal autonomy. It accords with the idea that Diocletian was essentially hostile to provincial elites, for whom the town was the prime arena of self-expression.

This, however, assumes a number of things: that all of the projects presented as by imperial representatives were funded by the towns, that these were not consulted on the matter, that they

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<sup>527</sup> Lepelley 1999b: 240: “Ces gouverneurs n'auraient pas pu mener de telles campagnes de leur propre initiative, sans l'aval ou plutôt l'ordre du gouvernement impérial.”

<sup>528</sup> On (the absence of) funding supplements in imperial building inscriptions, see chapter III pp. 129-31. Bransbourg 2008: 258 demands the inclusion of phrases such as *fisci sui* or *sua largitate*. The one imperial building inscription out of all examples, from any reign and any part of Africa, that mentions imperial funding is a bridge by Trajan (*CIL* 8.10117), which uses *pecunia sua*.

<sup>529</sup> See chapter III p. 129, reference in n. 307.

were unwilling to build the edifices in question, that such influence on the part of the state over city coffers was new, and that the towns' own ability to make use of them became restricted. None of these propositions are, in my opinion, likely to be true. To assume that all projects were funded by locals is to ignore how poor the evidence actually is for funding in these texts (and that silence on the matter was unusual for local projects). Second, the interest of the state had been to put a cap on local public construction rather than to promote it, and to see imperial officials as forcing it, against the will of the towns, would be entirely inconsistent with the long-standing aims of the state to check irresponsible spending. Restrictions were placed in particular on the kind of structures here in evidence, and increased state interference in the affairs of the towns would more likely have resulted in epigraphic silence. The expectation was that locals were eager to build showy monuments, regardless of whether it was economically sound, or if there were more pressing needs to attend to. Third, there is plenty of construction by locals in the same areas to show that the towns and their elite strata were willing and able – and at liberty – to build on their own terms with no sign of involvement from imperial authorities; in fact more able (or inclined) in the areas in question than ever. The customary role of state officials toward public construction, that is, to put a damper on it, is nowhere to be seen: on the contrary, they seem not only to allow but to initiate projects. The emergence of public construction by locals on the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. pattern may well be a reaction to a relaxation of old restrictions rather than the imposition of new ones. Nor does the activity of Aristobulus and Sossianus replace that of locals, at least as far as it was inscribed. It is not of the same kind (i.e., not mainly construction in sanctuaries), nor does it happen in the same places (i.e., not in the Northeast).

As for state involvement with local affairs, a number of scholars have recently rejected that this is anything new. Oshimizu and Bransbourg, though disagreeing on other matters, both argue that the imperial state, from the very beginning, had the mandate to interfere with the economy of the towns, including using their public funds, and that they often did so. The same theme is treated by Burton, who lists a long row of examples from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. onward, from all parts of the empire. Rather than causing damage to the towns, state interference was aimed at sustaining them, which often meant safeguarding them against abuse from their own elite strata.<sup>530</sup> One may furthermore consider whether these projects were desired more by the state than by the locals. The norm for imperial construction had been to serve military and transport needs, through roads, bridges, aqueducts, and civic construction at army camps aimed at forging ties between troops and emperors. None of the works associated with Aristobulus and Sossianus are of the type which has been argued to cause the state to requisition funds and corvée labor in the past – in short, roadwork or defenses. They belong instead to the kind of projects that raise the profile of a town, and one should not assume that they were unwelcome. Though uncommon among works by local magistrates, they were the typical, grand projects of senatorial patrons, a brand of *euergetism* rarely, if ever, involving the areas here touched upon.

Lepelley, while noting that the proconsuls had a tight grip on municipal construction, claims that the towns remained independent, supported by Lewin who argues that state appropriation of city funds should be dated to Constantine. Bransbourg argues, persuasively, that such appropriation was not the case even then, and that the idea of confiscation should be

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<sup>530</sup> Oshimizu 2012: 175; Bransbourg 2008; Burton 2004. So also Rémy 1998, esp. 63-73.

abandoned.<sup>531</sup> Rather than requisitioning of funds against the will of the locals, I suggest that the projects were of joint interest, serving both local and imperial purposes, and likely involving both local and imperial funds. Judging by earlier imperial projects, possible models for how the works were conceived and funded include joint efforts between imperial authorities and locals, as seen for instance in the aqueduct at Troas mentioned in the previous chapter, or the public lands at *Lepcis Magna*, by the revenues of which a proconsul paved its streets.<sup>532</sup> Several Diocletianic items are presented as part state, part town, such as the unknown structure raised at *Cuttilula*, the only building inscription to have been found in this small town.<sup>533</sup> Lactantius asserts that the construction spree of Diocletian entailed costs for “the provinces,” if not for the buildings, at least for workforce and logistics, and it is clear from his account that this was the expected procedure when emperors built.<sup>534</sup> It is not clear, however, what manner of funds are referred to with *provinciarum*, and like *pecunia publica* it allows for several possibilities. One is a remission of taxes, earmarked for construction, which was at times described in inscriptions as *ex indulgentia*. The model suggested by Slootjes for construction by Late Antique governors seems more plausible to me than construction by force: urban elites approached the governor

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<sup>531</sup> Lepelley 1996b, Lewin 2001. A number of sources is brought to bear on the matter, among them *CTh.* 10.3.1 and *Amm. Marc. Hist.* 25.4.5 (Julian), and *CTh.* 4.13.7 (Valentinian), both concerning the restoration of *vectigalia* to the towns and used to explain modest sprees of building epigraphy during their reigns. Constantine is often described as having confiscated municipal treasuries, based on Zosimus *Hist. nov.* 2.38. Julian (*Or.* 1.42-3) praised Constantius II in 358 for allowing the African towns a quarter of their *vectigalia*, which has been interpreted as though very little was otherwise so returned. Bransbourg 2008 argues that the policy was one of remitting part of the taxes due from the towns, not the revenue on their lands, to ameliorate the effect of the Diocletianic fiscal reform which he argues had severe effects on city finances. He however argues that the reform was not implemented in Africa until after Diocletian retired.

<sup>532</sup> See chapter III p. 130.

<sup>533</sup> *Cuttilula*: *AE* 2003.1977.

<sup>534</sup> Lactantius, *De mort.* 7.8: ...*non minor provinciarum exactio in exhibendis operariis et artificibus et plaustris, omnia quaecumque sint fabricandis operibus necessaria.*

with desired projects, which the governor, if so inclined, allowed to be built from a portion of the taxes from the cities in question, thus conferring a manner of benefaction.<sup>535</sup> The roles of Aristobulus and Sossianus are presented as more active, and I would suggest a more involved policy, perhaps a combination of the removal of barriers in the form of restrictions, of grants to be petitioned for by towns that wished to build, allowing part of their tax revenue to go to construction, and directly funded projects initiated by the two. There may have been a policy to be “so inclined,” and to be more so for the periphery than for the Northeast. One may note that had the state been eager to take over African towns, the Northeast, not the periphery, would have been the area to pitch one’s efforts, seeing that this is the area where there was anything much to appropriate. Rather, they appear to wish to bolster what urban fabric there was in the periphery, a stimulus that was perhaps not needed in the already decked out Northeast.

### *Summary conclusions*

The construction record for Diocletianic officials represents a drastic extension of the role of the state in the area of urban architecture in provincial towns. Whereas previously the state had only been involved with extraurban infrastructure, or civic architecture in military communities, Diocletian and Maximian are presented as responsible for the erection of structures of large proportions and popular appeal, in civilian towns that had never received any imperial attention whatsoever. The focus is on the grand rather than the utilitarian, the application regional rather than local. Although the texts contain elements that have affinities with previous imperial efforts in Africa, they stand apart from all established conventions, of any agent. Whatever the reality

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<sup>535</sup> Slootjes 2006: 84



behind the claims to construct, Aristobulus and Sossianus took pains to *present* the imperial administration as active in this role, making it clear by whose auspices the projects occurred with an explicitness that was at all times unusual for such high-profile projects, imperial or otherwise. The emphasis on the involvement of the state is remarkable, and perhaps rings of the artificial; it may be that the policy was one of inscribing rather than constructing.<sup>536</sup> Even so, the question remains why they would find it advantageous to pose in this manner. An empty claim is no less meaningful in this regard; in fact, it could be argued to be even more so.

My initial interpretation was socio-political – that central government wished to compete with local elites by expropriating a sphere of action crucial to their positions, placing themselves in their stead as benefactors. The preoccupation with structures with strong euergetic overtones seemed to support this view. Alternatively, I thought that they might have stepped into the void where local benefactors had failed, for reasons of poverty or lack of interest. It is, however, clear from the geographical distribution that this interpretation needs to be modified. The activities of Aristobulus and Sossianus articulated themselves in two distinct ways: emphatic involvement in the periphery, low profile in the old center. First, there are no strong elite euergetic traditions in the areas where they are seen to be active. On the contrary, these have their greatest (for some locations, only) showing of private and civic public construction at precisely this time. Second, the region by far the most marked by elite activity (and for the last 60+ years, the only area to show any sign of it at all) is entirely devoid of statements of imperial patronage. There is simply no correlation between shrinking elite building epigraphy and rising imperial. One might perhaps

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<sup>536</sup> Two items at *Lambaesis* raise questions as to the extent of the interventions. The aqueduct *Titulense* had been restored under Aurelian (*CIL* 8.2660-1), and the groma of the military camp may have been rededicated without any work being done (*CIL* 8.2571, 2571a); so Kolbe 1974.

see the celebratory items raised in the Northeast as evidence of pressure from the state, but these had long been customary, and I am reluctant to see them as the result of directions from central quarters, as they are, in every case, initiated by the towns. To erect monuments to the emperor was a privilege to be petitioned for, not a requirement. That said, it is ironic that the area that offers the best argument for imperial control of construction is the one where imperial representatives appear the least active.

The behavior of Aristobulus and Sossianus mirrors in many ways that of the “silent” group of senatorial benefactors treated in chapter II, and I believe an element of opposition between magnates and central government to be worth considering. A number of features, to be treated in the following chapter, suggest that the government was concerned with limiting the influence of high aristocrats in the area. Supporting the autonomy of provincial towns was, I believe, an important part of that process. But even if so, it can hardly have been their aim to do so through direct competition with senatorial patrons for their client bases, according to the standard model of patronage, as the areas where such patrons have been attested were left well be. Furthermore, some of the locations singled out are simply too minor to matter. The towns along the Western fringe are prominent enough, and were often recipients of benefactions by patrons – *Madauros* had hitherto only seen private construction, and the appearance there of three imperial items (out of three in total) is a rather stark change – but many of the locations are little more than villages, and far too insignificant to suggest themselves to the higher elites as arenas for ostentation. This begs the question why the imperial state should be concerned with communicating its role as propagators and protectors of civic life to these peripheral communities, a question that I will seek to answer in the following chapter.

## V. FARMERS, TOWNS AND SENATORS.

The next chapter will be dedicated to answering the question why these Diocletianic works were undertaken, and how we are to understand the particular form that they assumed. It is clear that the usual explanations for imperial construction do not apply. The projects are not utilitarian, and there are no emergencies reported of the kind that sometimes generated imperial attention, such as earthquakes. Lepelley claimed the government sparked a far-reaching campaign to restore an urban fabric hit by crisis, which does not fit well with the geography of imperial construction, appearing in places never visible before in the medium.<sup>537</sup> Waldherr connected the projects to strategic need, bolstering the Roman inhabitants on the fringes of the empire against restive native nomad populations, but none of the locations were garrisoned or show any sign of unrest since the revolt of the Gordians half a century earlier, which itself was not an ethnic conflict.<sup>538</sup> Nor do the projects trail the campaign of Maximian, which was conducted far to the West, and in any case postdates the construction projects by several years. None of the emperors (or Aristobulus, as far as we know) had any personal connection to the area, and save Carthage the towns had no particular allure that would suggest them to be worthy of such grand statements. Many are little more than villages, “crummy little places” in the words of Elizabeth Fentress.<sup>539</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Lepelley 1979: 88; the governors built to “corriger les effets de la crise.”

<sup>538</sup> Waldherr 1989 *passim* but in particular 47, 379, 385-6. Geography to him determines land use and settlement patterns, and he reconstructs a scenario of a constant threat of clashes between pastoralists and Romans at the edge of civilization.

<sup>539</sup> Fentress, personal communication. Among tiny places targeted for imperial construction are several of the townships on the High Tell: *Mididi*, *Cuttilula*, *Cit...*, *Civitas A...* and *Thugga Terebenthina*. *Thagura* in the West is also small, *Saltus Massipiani* was until then an imperial estate, *Fundus Iubaltianensis* still was. Construction by locals also appears in places of little or no previous consequence, e.g. *Naraggara*, *Castellum Ma... renses*. *Sufes* makes its first showing.

What motivated the provincial government to make such a strong show of involvement in marginal townships in rural areas, while ignoring long established cities in the heavily urbanized Northeast? In the following chapter, I will attempt to locate the initiative of Aristobulus and Sossianus by contextualizing it, examining both local and global factors. In the first section, I discuss developments in economy and demography, to understand the significance of the areas built in and why the state would pay so much attention to their towns. This will be followed by a discussion on the rhetoric that accompanied the administrative reforms, and how it describes the relations between the state and different social strata in the provinces, where I argue that a similar tendency for the government to address rural populations can be seen. Finally, I will discuss the relation between the state and the strongest elite strata of the empire, to attempt to understand the curious silence that is notable in the Northeast, which I will suggest is comparable to the attitude the Diocletianic government assumed toward the city of Rome.

### **V.1 The African economy at the time of Diocletian**

The “rebirth” of building epigraphy is contemporaneous with another striking development in the region, the booming Late Antique African economy, which has occupied many archaeologists in the last decades. The role of the African provinces as prime exporters of agrarian goods is arguably what has informed most of the scholarship on the region from the very beginning, from the earliest 19<sup>th</sup> century French colonial surveying expeditions which recorded Roman antiquities with the explicit aim of unraveling the secrets of ancient agricultural methods.<sup>540</sup> Early exploration of North Africa disfavored the later periods, habitually associating finds with the

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<sup>540</sup> Johansson de Chateau 2009: 77-107, with a thorough survey of early French campaigns and how they formed part of colonial policies.

Roman period and discounting the Arabs as incapable of this level of sophistication.<sup>541</sup> A similar prejudice attached to Late Antiquity; the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. was long seen as the high point, the later Roman era one of land abandonment and poor production. The last few decades have brought a growing awareness of the importance of African commodities in Late Antiquity, which has come to the fore as the true *floruit* for the African economy. While earlier Rome was the main destination, starting from the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> c. African goods traveled to the entire empire, in no way curbed by the Vandal invasion but peaking in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> c. This discovery was made in the late 60's and 70's from the identification of transport amphoras and red slip ceramics of African origin, some of the former marked with their ports of origin.<sup>542</sup> The finewares are generally assumed to travel with other commodities, an indication that African staples traveled *en masse* throughout the Mediterranean. From assemblages at the consumer end, research has moved to African soil, where a mass of data has both supported and nuanced the initial interpretations. Production sites for pottery and agrarian goods have been identified, and a series of both intensive and extensive surveys continue to contribute to our knowledge of the phenomenon.<sup>543</sup> Most of the scholarship is concerned with periods later than mine, by which time the geography and perhaps also the

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<sup>541</sup> See e.g. Johansson de Chateau 2009: 27, quoting Swearingen 1987: "...it is a well known fact that the archaeological atlases produced around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are expressions of interpretative prejudices which favored a Roman date over other time periods." A similar critique has been levelled against the aerial photography of Baradez along the *limes* (pp. 45-47).

<sup>542</sup> For a summary of the old view, Mackensen 1993: 484. John W. Hayes gave African Red Slip ware (ARS) a solid typology in 1972 with his *Late Roman Pottery* (and *A Supplement to Late Roman Pottery* in 1980). At about the same time came a seminal article by André Tchernia and Fausto Zevi (1969, "Amphores de Byzacène au bas-empire." *AntAfr* 3: 173-214), where they identified amphoras bearing stamps from *Hadrumetum*, *Leptiminus*, *Sullethum* and *Thaenae* which provided the basis for identifying forms as African. They date to the mid to late 3<sup>rd</sup> c. but a continuation into the 4<sup>th</sup> c. has been suggested. Later, *Neapolis* and *Acholla* have been added to the list (Bonifay 2004: 11). Among their many followers is Clementina Panella, who has argued for the rise to dominance of African goods in a row of articles, e.g. Panella 1983, 1993 and 1999.

<sup>543</sup> See chapter I p. 39 n. 83 for references to African surveys.

demography of export production had changed substantially from the outset of the 4th c. Nevertheless it is clear that the “African wonder” was already well underway at the time when Diocetian entered his office. New developments have been attributed to the turn of the 4th c., raising questions as to what sparked them, and what the attitude to them was on the part of the Diocletianic government.<sup>544</sup> The coincidence with the (re)appearance of building epigraphy calls for a closer look, to understand if, and if so, how, the two may be related.<sup>545</sup>

I will begin with a general description, attempting to extract an image of the situation in the time of Diocletian. However, to discuss a particular administration in this context is a fraught affair considering the sources involved, which do not allow for much chronological precision, and the picture that I will draw is by necessity an approximation. I will also leave much out for the sake of brevity, and concentrate on the issues that are the most important for my purposes: the geography of production, the social groups involved, and the role, if any, played by imperial authorities. Though research since the 1970’s has added a (sometimes bewildering) wealth of data, many questions remain to be answered even on the most fundamental issues, such as what was actually exported, and where it was produced, two questions that are closely intertwined.

### *The geography of production*

Much of the discussion has concerned the development in three different regions: the Northeast, the Sahel, and South Central Tunisia (the latter corresponding to inland Byzacena and, to some

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<sup>544</sup> Panella 1999: 195 dates the start of the phenomenon to Septimius Severus, with crucial developments in late 3rd - early 4th c., such as multiplication of amphora forms. The most obvious changes are to the geography of fineware production; see below pp. 238-241.

<sup>545</sup> Lepelley 1979: 35-6, esp. n. 29, who views the epigraphic record as a straightforward index of prosperity, ties it to regained agrarian prosperity after a series of slump decades.

extent, the West), with the focus shifting from the one to the other. For long, the consensus was that the main commodity exported was olive oil, kicked off by the dole introduced by Septimius Severus and reaching Rome by means of the *Classis Africana*, newly installed at Carthage. The trade later grew to encompass the entire Mediterranean, to the detriment of other producing regions.<sup>546</sup> The 4th c. text *Expositio totius mundi* gives as the first piece of information about Africa that it provided almost all peoples with *usum olei*.<sup>547</sup> This seemed corroborated by aerial photography in the Sahel revealing centuriation with olive plantations, and the discovery in South Central Tunisia of whole areas with olive presses of remarkable dimensions and capacity.<sup>548</sup> This suggested specialized production at the industrial level, and sparked much scholarship on the nature of the ancient economy and its ability to show real growth.<sup>549</sup> Since then, new data have entered the picture, bringing considerable discussion. Most of this concerns transport vessels, which have been shown to have carried other goods besides oil, some lined

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<sup>546</sup> The oil dole was reinstated by Severus Alexander after being withdrawn by Elagabalus, SHA *Septimius Severus* 19.3, 23.2; *Severus Alexander* 22.2. That oil was considered an important African commodity earlier still is indicated by Antonine inscriptions, one mentioning an *adiutor* to the Prefect of the *annona* in charge of oil from Spain and Africa (*CIL* 2.1180) another a dedication to the Prefect of the *annona* by *mercatores frumentari et oleari afrarii* (*CIL* 6.1620). 15% of the amphoras on the Testaccio originate from Africa, which probably represents less than the total seeing that other assemblages at Rome show a far greater proportion of African amphorae. The *annona* fleet was introduced by Commodus in 186; SHA *Commodus* 17.7-8.

<sup>547</sup> Anon., *Expositio totius mundi* 483-486.

<sup>548</sup> Ben Baaziz 2003a: 203-4; Sehili 2008: 783-787, with further references. One enormous oilery covered as much as 2,042 m<sup>2</sup>, located at *Saltus Beguenses*. It was of a high capacity type (the “jumelle”) unique to a region stretching from *Sufetula* and *Cillium*, through *Thala* to modern Rohia on the High Tell. It was likely invented in this area in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. Ben Baaziz 2003a: 210, 217. Mattingly 1997: 128-9 also describes the High Steppe as an area of industrial level oil production, far beyond local needs.

<sup>549</sup> Mattingly 1988: 45, defending his calculation in 1993: 496; Hitchner 1993: 500-501 and *passim*. Photographs published by Saumagne 1929 and 1952, based on which Mattingly calculated very high output numbers for the Sahel.

with pitch that would have tainted its taste.<sup>550</sup> Furthermore their production centers do not match well with what is known of olive oil production.<sup>551</sup> Oil (and grain) still stand at the center of the debate, but it is now clear that African exports were a more diversified affair, including substantial volumes of fish products, textiles, and perhaps also wine. Local patterns of consumption have also come to play a significant part in recent analyses of the phenomenon.

### *Production in the Northeast*

As a consequence, coastal Byzacena and the interior have contended for the role of prime region involved. The Northeast, by contrast, has played the unaccustomed role of underdog, with no signs of any major changes until after 300. The main staple there likely remained grain, but its transport does not leave material traces that allow us to assess any volumes. A survey conducted in the region of *Thugga* showed a high density of oil and/or wine presses, but of modest size and

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<sup>550</sup> Suggested by a pitch lining on a portion of the amphoras; see Lequément, 1975; esp. 678, with further notes to pitch-lined containers elsewhere. One amphora with lead sealings in a wreck by *Hippo Regius* was lined with pitch, which the author claimed excluded oil as content, suggesting instead fish products from a factory attested at *Neapolis* on Cap Bon. It led to a reexamination of the Ostia material, identifying several pitched vessels assumed to have carried oil or wine; Bonifay & Garnier 2007: 10. Michel Bonifay, whose *Etudes sur la céramique romaine tardive d'Afrique* from 2004 greatly advanced the study of African ceramics, argues zealously against olive oil as the main African export; see e.g. Bonifay 2003, esp. 113-115.

<sup>551</sup> While the strongest evidence for olive oil production at export level comes from the interior, the major amphora kilns were located along the coast of Byzacena. Exceptions exist, with considerable productions at sites in confirmed oil producing regions, but the vessels from them are not much found on the consumer end. In the words of Michael Fulford 2009: 10: "The evidence for the amphoras does not fit with what we know of what was produced." For amphora production in Byzacena, Peacock, Bejaoui and Ben Lazreg, 1989 and 1990, inland productions 1990: 62-66, 74, 83. None of the inland amphoras were lined with pitch. Bonifay 2004: 478; Bonifay & Garnier 2007: 19. Production at *Leptiminus* in *Leptiminus (Lamta) I-III*, JRA Suppl. Series 4 (1992), 41 (2001), and 87 (2011); also Stone, Stirling and Ben Lazreg 1998; for *Sullecthum*, Lavoie 1989. For a summary on kilns and wares, Bonifay 2004: 31-41, not treating the inland workshops. On discontinued production at site 290 in *Leptiminus*, Carr 2009: 106, and Moore 2008: 2277 claiming the amphoras passing the port were manufactured in the interior.





Fig 14. A simplified version of an often published map of African pottery kilns, based on Bonifay 2004 and 2011, the latest version Hobson 2012. Those in operation at the accession of Diocletian are encircled, and major towns have been added to show the relation between the production areas and the civic network. The High Steppe, Cap Bon and the northern Sahel come across as the most active regions, with the Northeast emerging only later, likely post Diocletian.

not all of the same date.<sup>552</sup> Other crops were certainly produced besides grain, at respectable volumes, but none of the industrial size installations that suggest intensification have been found. Moreover, the consumption in the area would have been far higher than in the periphery, not only due to the density of settlement but the presence of the megacity Carthage, often neglected. Theodore Peña interpreted late 4<sup>th</sup> c. ostraca from Carthage as evidence of olive oil production for export in the Northeast, but his topographical argument is not strong. He did however show that oil passed through Carthage, and that it reached the port in skins, at times from quite afar.<sup>553</sup> This shows that the amphora stamps from Byzacena do not give us the whole picture. It has become increasingly apparent that there were several and sometimes overlapping local patterns of circulation, with a southern and northern sphere (the latter corresponding to the old *pertica*), but one way or another, goods from all quarters reached Carthage.<sup>554</sup>

What is puzzling, and has lead to arguments of economic decline, is the tendency to sharp shifts in fineware exports, taken as indicative of the fate of staple goods. ARS A wares were very

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<sup>552</sup> The one (partly published) survey conducted in the region of *Thugga* has yielded respectable numbers of presses (0,66 per identified site), although the author expresses doubt as to whether these were primarily for wine or oil production; see de Vos 2000: 38.

<sup>553</sup> Peña 1998: 196-7, 199-200, 212, 225 examining a late 4th c. cache of ostraca from Carthage interpreted as a tally of olive oil for *annona* export. The evidence for production in the Northeast is slight. Of four toponyms mentioned, Peña locates two in Byzacena, while *Caprorenses* is identified with *Montes Caprarienses* which he locates in the vicinity of *Hippo Regius* (but which the editors of the Barrington Atlas identify with a sparsely settled mountain range along the desert fringe of Numidia). The fourth toponym is obscure, although he labors to place it on Cap Bon. Admittedly these four account for only a small part of the oil tallied in the records, while the rest is of unknown origin. However, roughly half to two thirds of it arrived in skins, *ascopa*, explicitly labeled “from Byzacena,” which Peña argues was a denomination of type, not location.

<sup>554</sup> Bonifay 2004: 223; Moore 2008: 2276, 2283-4. The two areas of circulation overlap at *Pupput*. Gasco 2003: 236 places *Pupput* (before its elevation to colony by Commodus) within the *pertica* and posits that it ended precisely there. The exception is Carthage, where Byzacene goods both from the coast and the interior have been retrieved, while no goods seem to travel in the opposite direction from north to south.

widespread in the 2<sup>nd</sup> c., and while their production centers are unknown, they are usually assumed to have been located in the Northeast.<sup>555</sup> These wares disappear suddenly under the Severans, following a curve reminiscent of that of building epigraphy. The drop is too early to be well explained by global crisis stifling the markets, and its cause has been suggested to be the institution at Carthage of the *Classis Africana* by Commodus around 190, on the assumption that the *navicularii* were prohibited from augmenting the shipments with private cargos.<sup>556</sup> From c. 300 onward the Northeast reenters the scene as new wares called ARS D start production in the area of *Thuburbo Minus*.<sup>557</sup> Simultaneously, much activity is also registered in and around the port *Neapolis* on Cap Bon, including fish salteries, amphora production, and oil exports.<sup>558</sup> This has understandably been connected to the appearance of building epigraphy in the Northeast, interpreted as an indication of regained prosperity. There is no perfect fit, however, in either time or space. The towns visible on the maps of building epigraphy lie far from the sites involved in the new export productions, which are located in areas “silent” in terms of epigraphy, as much under Diocletian as previous emperors; the area devoid of building inscriptions has in fact grown

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<sup>555</sup> For a thorough account of the history of ARS study, Mackensen and Schneider 2002: 121-122. For a summary of the chronology and spread of different series of wares, Fentress *et al.* 2004. From identifying shapes, the focus has shifted to surveying pottery-making centers, with important contributions by Mackensen 1993, and Bejaoui, Ben Lazreg and Peacock 1989 and 1990, detailing the various centers and their outputs. Bonifay 2004: 45-48 suggests that A wares were produced at Oudhna, rejected by Mackensen 2009b: 20 based on analysis of the fabrics.

<sup>556</sup> Fentress *et al.* 2004:150. Reynolds suggests that Septimius Severus and Caracalla imposed restrictions on goods accompanying *annona* traffic from Tunisia, released by Severus Alexander. This would have opened the way for new initiatives, resulting in the rise of the C wares traveling along with oil and grain from central Tunisia. Reynolds 2010: 139-140.

<sup>557</sup> See Mackensen 1993 and 2009: 18-20, with bibliography to all sites. The main kilns were located at El Mahrine near Tebourba, ancient *Thuburbo Minus*.

<sup>558</sup> For a fish saltery at *Neapolis*, in operation under Diocletian, Ben Lazreg *et al.* 1995. A small plant at Port-Prince on Cap Bon may also have produced fish products for export. The kilns by *Pheradi Maius* close to *Neapolis* appears to have begun production at much the same time.

larger still. Furthermore, the coincidence shows some circularity, as the appearance of D wares has been downdated from c. 315-20 to c. 300 to meet the dates of the building inscriptions.<sup>559</sup> It also remains to be explained why, if building epigraphy and the exports with which D wares traveled were connected, the record of the former should go silent by the time production of the latter gained momentum, and remain low through its *floruit*.

That said, the origins, if not the effects, of the phenomenon are likely to be sought in the time of Diocletian. The change is fairly sharp, suggesting an impetus provided by institutional measures rather than a spontaneous development. That the state took an interest in the economy of the area is clear, and not only for the obvious reasons of provisioning Rome. For instance, an imperial textile factory was installed at Carthage, capitalizing on a long tradition of pasturing.<sup>560</sup> Another measure that betrays close knowledge of local circumstances, and that proved more significant in the long run, is the province divisions, put in place sometime between 295 and 303, which follow almost to a tee the outline of the old *pertica*, and which – not incidentally – cut all regions that figure in the discussion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. economic boom entirely from Carthaginian dominion.<sup>561</sup>

#### *Production in the South: the interior powerhouse and the enigmatic Sahel*

The high capacity pressing rigs found on the High Steppe and High Tell have no parallel on the coast, where on the contrary olive presses of any kind are so scarce as to raise doubts as to

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<sup>559</sup> Mackensen 1993: 479-484, quoting Waldherr. He claims the shops were founded under Diocletian, although the pottery points to a Constantinian date.

<sup>560</sup> According to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, which also places a procurator for African dyes there, as well as a separate procurator for dyes from Djerba, where murex finds attest to production. The Prices Edict mentions a number of clothing items from Africa, of decent quality.

<sup>561</sup> See chapter I p. 49 n. 110 and chapter V p. 293-4 for the province divisions.

whether olive farmers in the area used stone equipment at all. The Tunisian surveyors who have examined the region in recent years reject the possibility that it ever produced at a level sufficient for export.<sup>562</sup> That there was extensive oleiculture in the region of *Thysdrus* is however clear, and while the date of the remains shown by the aerial photographs (as well as the level of production that they indicate) is unclear, amphora production at nearby Sidi el Hani is strongly suggestive of oleiculture in the area.<sup>563</sup> That said, it must be remembered that the Sahel, like the Northeast, would itself have consumed considerable volumes, as it had a very high site density in its rural hinterland and a string of wealthy towns along the coast, while the High Steppe was far less populous. The region directly to the north from *Thala* to *Mactaris* was more densely settled, and the surveys show a mix of industrial level presses and the more traditional types, but its production still outpaced its own local needs by far.<sup>564</sup> It is surely no coincidence that the remarkable new development in fineware exports touches on the same areas, the ARS C wares produced along the slopes of the Dorsale with its main centers at Sidi Marzouk Tounsi in the *Thusca* region and at El-Guellal near Djilma on the High Steppe. These begin production in the 3rd c., grew significantly at the turn of the 4th, and remained in sway well into the 6th,

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<sup>562</sup> 60 oil manufacturing units on 1219 sites, a rate of 0.05 per site. Although accepting arboriculture of some kind (as shown by the rural kilns identified in the Sahel of which at least some used refuse from it as fuel), Ben Baaziz 1999: 42-47 claims it to be untenable that the area produced olive oil on an export scale. Bonifay 2002: 119 accepts a low level of production in the Sahel, and Sehili 2008: 781, 789-790 suggests that it produced only to cover local needs.

<sup>563</sup> Sehili 2008: 789, and Ben Baaziz 1999: 45-46 are in doubt about the date for the plantations shown by the photographs. They point out that the Sahel is highly diverse in terms of settlement and exploitation, and to extrapolate a general pattern from any one part is not advisable.

<sup>564</sup> Sehili 2008: 777-778 claims western Byzacena was almost entirely devoted to olive oil production. Ben Baaziz 1986: 293 locates intense oleiculture in the area southwest of *Mactaris*, with numerous presses identified in a densely settled area. Of 75 present day sites, all but 3 were occupied in antiquity.

particularly through their lamps.<sup>565</sup> ARS C seems to have been produced exclusively for export, as it is little embedded in Africa itself, and to have traveled straight to Rome.<sup>566</sup>

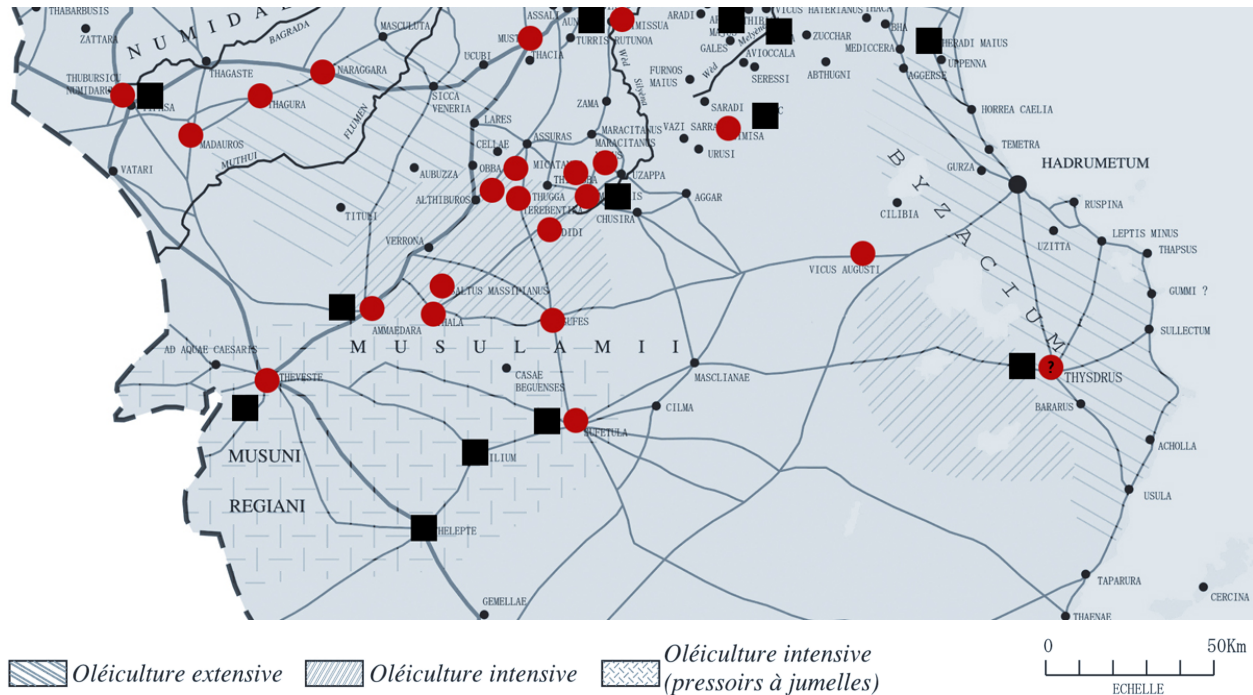


Fig. 15. Oil producing regions, after Sehili 2008: 790 (fig. 6), to which I have added locations where Diocletianic building epigraphy (red dot) or statues (black square) have been attested.

<sup>565</sup> Mackensen 2009b: 18-20. On the close connection between oil and ceramics production, Mackensen 1993: 53ff; 2009: 38. On Sidi Marzouk Tounsi, Bejaoui, Ben Lazreg and Peacock 1990: 66ff. The site is vast and strewn with sherds, its output massive, growing from the late 3rd c. to a peak in the 5th. The site is damaged by robber trenches but its *vicus* appears to have seen a fair measure of monumentalization, with a baths complex with marble veneer and mosaics. The authors date Djilma and el-Guellal to the 4th c., while Mackensen and Schneider 2002: 130-1 claim production there had begun in the last quarter of the 3rd c. On lamps from the same kilns, starting in the late 3rd - early 4th c, Bonifay 2004: 457; Rossiter 2009: 98-100. Central Tunisia furnished ARS C lamps for large scale export well into the 7th c.

<sup>566</sup> Some have been found at Carthage, and imitation wares from the mid 3rd c. onward have turned up in the intensive surveys at *Leptiminus*, as have great quantities of ARS C lamps, which suggests inland products travelled through this port; Carr 2009: 110. For a list of ARS C findspots, see Mackensen 2004. A and D wares circulated far more within Africa than C wares, the distribution of which in Italy suggests that Rome was its first destination, the one port where individual merchants obtained and diffused it further; see Fentress *et al.* 2004: 148-150, 155-8 with graphs, figs 11.1-3, 22-24.

No fineware kilns producing for export have been identified in the Sahel, where on the contrary amphora kilns and fish salteries are in ample evidence.<sup>567</sup> There is thus a fairly clean division between finewares and olive oil produced in the interior, and amphoras and fish products on the coast. Wine, grain and textiles likely also traveled, but neither their production centers nor their modes of transport have been firmly established.<sup>568</sup>

The respective proportions of the content of African export amphoras is a matter of intense discussion. The most ardent defender of large scale exports of fish products is Michel Bonifay, who uses shipwreck data to show that pitched amphoras, that he assumes never contained oil, traveled farther than non-pitched, and he also rejects that oil traveled from the interior to the coast due to the exorbitant costs of overland transport.<sup>569</sup> At Rome, however, the great majority of African vessels found are oil containers (even discounting the Monte Testaccio finds), suggesting there were separate modes of distribution for different products.<sup>570</sup> Ships that were

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<sup>567</sup> Foucher 1970 identified a fish saltery at *Sullectum*, and since then many more (if modest) operations have been added. For an updated list, Slim *et al.* 2004: 184. Their chronology is not certain, but surface finds point to a 3rd c. horizon.

<sup>568</sup> Bonifay 2003: 119, admits there is very little evidence for African wine exports. Hobson 2012: 95-99 lists potential winemaking sites, in areas that are epigraphically silent. For textiles, Johannesen 1954, with most evidence culled from the Prices Edict and the *Notitia Dignitatum*. Africa appears to have been associated with fine cloaks, judging by passages in the *Historia Augusta* styling them as awards to persons especially favored; e. g., SHA *Carus et al* 20.6.

<sup>569</sup> Bonifay 2004: 472; a summary in Bonifay & Garnier 2007 with tables of types and content, esp. p. 10 with notes 17-19 to the positions of different scholars. Bonifay agrees with Panella on the timeline and spread of African goods, but replaces olive oil with *salsamenta*, 2004: 478. He himself (2004: 455-456) admits that goods were diffused into regions of Egypt which greatly exceeded the limit of 100km for overland travel, and Fulford 2009:10 points out that Arretine wares were produced far inland. The shipwreck data (Bonifay 2004: 453-4) comes from coastal Spain and France, not from cargoes to Rome, and some ships appear to have traveled straight from Byzacena. Whatever commodity C wares traveled with would thus not be found on them.

<sup>570</sup> Stone 2009: 136-139, 143 argues for a redistributive model for oil, and other (likely market) mechanisms diffusing fish products and wine. 50 out of 62 amphoras found at Rome with stamps from *Sullectum* were oil vessels, of as yet unidentified type. Oil vessels dominate also among

not destined to Rome more often carried pitched amphoras, and less often ARS C, than those that were. It also remains to be shown that exported African oil was alimentary and not intended as lamp fuel, with which Juvenal associated it, and which branding it as *usum olei* rather than *oleum*, as does the author of the *Expositio*, might likewise suggest.<sup>571</sup> It would have been in high demand, and it is perhaps no coincidence that the ARS C kilns exported masses of lamps. That heavy goods demonstrably traveled abroad from the oil producing regions of the interior is shown by the spread of ARS C, and besides, any other potential destinations of the oil there produced, such as the camps at *Lambaesis*, lay further away than the Byzacena ports.<sup>572</sup> The skins confirmed as oil transport vessels for the late 4th c. were no doubt in use also in the 3rd.<sup>573</sup>

On balance, thus, although the Sahel should be considered a region that not only conveyed but produced export goods, the interior is no less significant, and holds more interest for the purposes of this study seeing that the chronological horizon is more consistently the 3rd and 4th c., thus forming the backdrop to the activities of Aristobulus and Sossianus. The goods produced in the interior are also more closely associated with state interests – which is my main object

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identified types: out of 11 amphoras identified as carrying oil, 7 were found at Rome, against 2 out of 10 that were not for oil. Among the stamps identified at the fish saltery at *Sullethum*, none have been retrieved at Rome, but only at other sites. Foucher 1970: 19-20.

<sup>571</sup> *Satires* 5.86-91. Seeking to contrast the pleasant with the vile, Juvenal describes a host feasting on succulent fish cooked in fine oils while his miserable client is fed sorry vegetables, smelling of lamps since they are cooked in Numidian oil. This substance reeks so bad that no Roman will share a bath with an African. Some pitch-lined vessels have been confirmed as carrying oil, Bonifay & Garnier 2007: 11-13, 19, 29.

<sup>572</sup> Bonifay (Bonifay & Garnier 2007: 22), reluctant to accept oleiculture, argued that the C wares traveled with grain, rejected by Sehili 2008: 791 who identified small mills, but nothing indicating large scale wheat production in the interior of Byzacena.

<sup>573</sup> Peña 1998: 213. Hobson 2012: 191-2 suggests that textiles were also produced in the interior, pointing out that a long tradition of pastoralism on the High Steppe would combine well with the likewise seasonal oleiculture, and moreover would supply skins for transport. Johannesen 1954: 160 locates a textile factory at *Mactaris* on the High Tell.



here – seeing that the *annona* has been suggested to supply their main mode of transport.<sup>574</sup> It is also a more surprising development, as one might expect the well connected port cities to have been involved in export productions, while the rural interior had not played such roles before. The interplay between the coast and the interior remains to be fully understood, and we should likely envision some manner of symbiosis, but it seems clear that Byzacena and the West would have been booming regions for agrarian production at the accession of Diocletian. Both had been vitalized in the past few decades, while the Northeast had yet to rear its head. Before the rise of the ARS D kilns, C wares were the only fine ceramics leaving Africa. It also seems clear that at least some of the exports from here were of interest to the state, especially the oil which appears to have traveled to the capital in bulk. If, as suggested, olive oil became a major item for state transports besides grain, it must be assumed that the High Tell and the High Steppe, and likely also Numidia Proconsularis, were of key interest to the administration. Regardless of how active the state was in promoting the development there, it certainly had a stake in it, and it was without question closely monitored by the provincial government.

It is notable that the areas known to have been involved in export production of olive oil and ARS C overlap remarkably well with the record for building inscriptions. The majority of

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<sup>574</sup> Several of the articles in the *JRA* volume in honor of Bonifay emphasize this connection, e.g., Bes & Poblome 2009: 88, arguing that African goods found in the East had passed through Rome; Stone 2009:128,142; also Fentress *et al.* 2004: 157, Panella 1999: 184-188. Nor is it clear that pitched amphora types were dominant at the time. Of forms listed by Bonifay 2004: 474, those current in the period here treated are nos. 9 (Hammamet 2), 21 (Africana I), 22 (Africana IIA), 23 (Africana IIB), 24 (Africana IIB "Pseudo-Tripolitaine"), 25 (Africana IIC) and 26 (Africana IID), of which types 22, 25 and 26 appear with pitch lining, 21 and 24 without, 9 both with and without pitch, while the status of 23 is unknown. Possibly also circulating are types 5 (*Leptiminus* II) and 12 (*Leptiminus* I). Vessels of type 5 have been found lined with pitch, while the status for type 12 remains unknown. The common pitch-lined Keay 25.1 amphora appears from c. 300, but does not come to the fore until several decades later and is not likely to have been in production when Aristobulus and Sossianus were in office.

the rural communities that become visible for the first time, both through imperial and local initiatives, are located right in the nexus of oil and fineware production such as it is known from the present state of survey data. The coincidence strongly suggests a connection to agrarian production, whether we see the state interventions as attempts to support these communities or to control them. As for the Sahel, the lack of epigraphy from the area at any time makes private or state construction activity in its towns impossible to gauge. A dedication of some sort to the emperors was certainly made at *Thysdrus*, and the attribution to Aristobulus of the restoration of the *Thysdrus* aqueduct is very probable. Perhaps contemporary is the installation of waterworks in the same city by a *curator rei publicae*, specially appointed by an emperor, who describes his effort as *providentia*. This text includes some rather high-sounding pagan phrases that sit ill with a Christian emperor (although Julian might fit the bill). The quality of the water was too poor for drinking, and the aqueduct likely served irrigation. The plausibility of investments at *Hadrumetum* has been mentioned, as have the province divisions which seem to accord with patterns for goods circulation. The reason may have been to remove Carthage and its strong elites from direct influence over what was exported from the periphery.

The silence noted for building epigraphy in the Northeast is consistent with a silence in terms of production. It should however be noted that the productions that arise in the Northeast in the early 4<sup>th</sup> c present the only entirely new development in that regard that may be datable to Diocletian. Both the Sahel and the interior were already active, and any actions the government undertook should be seen as a response to a preexisting situation. It is my impression that, whatever the aim of their measures, the relocation of the bulk of fineware production to the

Northeast was not desired, but a consequence of state intervention prompting elites based at Carthage to invest closer to home rather than in a region no longer under senatorial control.<sup>575</sup>

### *The social side of production*

It is a commonplace to see the municipal elites of the Northeast as flourishing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. due to grain and fineware exports. By contrast, the areas where the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. productions are located are not characterized by municipalities, but by vast rural expanses flanked to the east and west by a string of sizeable towns, to the south by *Sufetula*, to the north, by *Mactaris* and the High Tell. Within these confines were numerous estates, some very large, along with the odd minor town such as *Sufes* or *Thala*. Subregions do differ – the *Thusca* and *Gamonia* to the north had a longer settled history and many small townships, while the far less urbanized *Gamuta* had not been exploited on this scale earlier and appears to have been given over to larger units, often including dependent villages settled by indigenous farmers. The varied landscape of the Sahel was void of proper towns except *Thysdrus* and the ports, and barely even had nucleated settlements except in the northernmost part.<sup>576</sup> Neither of these regions was remotely like the Northeast, with its many towns in all their monumental finery. If money was made in Byzacena, where did it go?

If one follows the money, the quick answer is, to the coast. This is the period when the famous African *domus* with their astounding wealth of mosaics appear along the coasts, grand

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<sup>575</sup> Mackensen 1993: 479-80 uses the province divisions to explain the reemergence of export ARS production in the Northeast in the early 4th c., although interpreting this in different ways.

<sup>576</sup> On the absence of towns, Ben Baaziz 1999: 33-34, 36. Surveying has revealed a highly varied settlement pattern in the Sahel, with some regions characterized by large units, others by small, some again almost void of settlements. The hinterland of the two largest cities, *Hadrumentum* and *Thysdrus*, have no nucleated settlements; these areas appear dominated by estates whose owners resided in the towns. The densest settlement record is found in the area furthest to the north.

villas whose splendid accoutrements fill the Tunisian museums. There is little that compares in the areas where production actually happened.<sup>577</sup> It has been argued that the common fish mosaics was connected to the trade in *salsamenta*, but the motif had been standard ever since the Republican era, and is found all over the Italian peninsula, not least at Pompeii.<sup>578</sup> It should likely simply be interpreted as “the good life,” along with hunt mosaics, a type of subject matter on the rise at the time.<sup>579</sup> Quite unique are however the motifs featuring estate villas and agrarian activities, in particular the famous Cherchel mosaic from Algeria featuring scenes of agricultural labor, which has been tentatively dated to my period, and also that of Dominus Iulius, about a century later.<sup>580</sup> Agrarian wealth had become something to display, seen in a more modest format in the epitaphs to the two most famous African farmers, the so-called “Harvester of Maktar” and the *colonus* at the *Fundus Aufidianus*.<sup>581</sup> Both give detailed and vivid descriptions of rural life at the time (the late 3<sup>rd</sup> c.), showing that this type of information was deemed fitting for the encomiastic context of an obituary, something not seen earlier. Most of the material wealth evident from survey data is located close to the coasts; Ben Baaziz reports an unusual level of embellishment on central units at estates in the Sahel, with marble imports and private baths.<sup>582</sup>

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<sup>577</sup> The Sidi Ghrib villa is the one known example of a grand inland *domus* to match the estate motif so common in mosaics from coastal sites. Nevett 2008.

<sup>578</sup> So Hobson 2012: 224-5. It is one of the most common motifs among Campanian mosaics, in ample evidence in the National Archaeological Museum of Naples. An early example can be found at the sanctuary at Praeneste in Latium, which lies far inland.

<sup>579</sup> See Sporn 2006 for the popularity of “good life” themes in contemporary elite art.

<sup>580</sup> For the date of the Cherchel mosaic, see Bianchi Bandinelli 1971: ch. 2; for the Dominus Julius mosaic, Parrish 1979, and Raeck 1987, see also a recent discussion in Dossey 2010.

<sup>581</sup> “Harvester of Maktar,” *CIL* 8.11824. *Fundus Aufidianus*, *AE* 2005.1685; see below n. 596.

<sup>582</sup> Ben Baaziz 1999: 39-41; especially at Sidi el Hani where the amphora kilns were located. A considerable part of the wealth appears to have ended up with the local proprietors.

That said, the mausolea on the High Steppe have been interpreted as testimonies to wealth remaining in the area.<sup>583</sup> The main share of the fanciful ARS C wares from the *Navigius* workshop, produced at Hr es-Srira on the High Steppe during the reign of Diocletian, ended up in *Thysdrus*, as it seems, a town that also saw a number of embellished *domus* dated to the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> c.<sup>584</sup> Dossey has argued that the use of finewares for the first time reached subelite strata and particularly in the interior, evidence of a rise in the standard of living for the farming population, bringing demand that sparked imitation productions of export wares, with but local circulation.<sup>585</sup> This shows that wealth did trickle down the social ladder, if perhaps not how far; the rural hierarchy included many levels between owner and chattel, and the wider access to consumer goods that she posits may not have reached further down than the managerial stratum. That at least some part of the surpluses generated by African agrarian exports ended up with small town decurions in the interior is indicated by the building inscriptions dating to Diocletian. The social stratum that becomes visible through them appears quite comfortable, if insignificant in the eyes of the higher aristocracy that operated on an international scale. The 4<sup>th</sup> c. historian and politician Aurelius Victor was born in such a farming town around 320, and describes his

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<sup>583</sup> Although it should be remembered that the fanciest of these by far, the mausoleum of the *Flavii* at *Cillium* (*CIL* 8.211-3), dates to the mid 2nd c.

<sup>584</sup> Leone 2007: 53 gives a late 3rd - early 4th c. date for *Maison de Lucius Verus* and *Maison du Paon* at *Thysdrus*. On the *Navigius* workshop, Salomonson 1969; finds from the cemetery at El Aouja and from *Sufetula*, Salomonson 1976: 160; finds at *Thysdrus*, Bonifay 2004: 431, who dates the workshop erroneously to the late 2nd c., likely a typing error as he refers for his dates to Salomonson 1976: 14, who places the activity of *Navigius* “kurz vor und nach 300 n. Chr.”

<sup>585</sup> Dossey 2010, *passim*. Bonifay 2004: 487 on the great variety of local forms and their limited circulation. Imitations of models from the Northeast have been noted at *Leptiminus* from early 3rd c., from Central Tunisia and especially from Sidi Marzouk Tounsi from mid 3rd c. onward; Carr 2009: 105-7, and Moore: 2008: 2277. On ARS import substitution as an indicator of economic vitality, Fentress *et al.* 2004: 150, 156-157. Worth mentioning is a series known as A/D that circulated from late 2nd to about 270; however, where it was produced is not known. See Fentress *et al.* 2004: 155-156. Bonifay 2004: 51 suggests at El-Guellal in central Tunisia.

decurion father as a poor man – though evidently wealthy enough to send his son to study at Rome. “Poor” should not be understood as “destitute,” but simply as not belonging to the most opulent senatorial nobility.<sup>586</sup> The case of Aurelius Victor warns against interpreting the lack of epigraphy from these towns from 306 onward as a sign of their demise; on the contrary they were very much alive, their councilors possessed a non-negligible level of wealth and were connected to contemporary international society.<sup>587</sup>



Fig. 16. Vase signed by *Navigius*, Princeton University Art Museum.

<sup>586</sup> On his peasant father; Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 20.5; see also Bird’s introduction with biography. Augustine, *Confessions* 2.3.5 in similar manner describes his father Patricius, born in the 350’s, as “poor among the citizens of Thagaste,” even though he was a member of the town council and able to provide his son with an education of international standard.

<sup>587</sup> To repeat the verdict of Saastamoinen (see chapter II p. 120): presence of building epigraphy testifies to at least some surplus wealth, while its absence proves nothing.

*Estates, their owners, managers and workers*

Modest landowners such as these small town elites were likely involved in export productions; however, most arguments on how these goods were produced revolve around estates. This is the case for the interior, where both the C ware kilns and the grand oileries were located on estates, and also for the areas in the Sahel that showed signs of oleiculture and amphora production, around *Thysdrus* and by the Sebkhet Sidi el Hani.<sup>588</sup> Some estates in the interior appear to have been astoundingly large, bringing to mind the quote by Agennius Urbicus that African estates approximated provinces.<sup>589</sup> Little is securely known about who owned or operated them, not least due to the paucity of epigraphy from estates, especially private ones.<sup>590</sup> It is often argued that Berber populations were employed, combining olive harvesting with pastoralism, which is reasonable for the High Steppe as it was home to native tribes, but likely less relevant on the High Tell. Seeing the sheer scale of the oil installments, Mattingly argued that it was improbable that single farmers or villages could afford the risk, and that investment from great landowners

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<sup>588</sup> The former known from an inscription naming estates in the area, the latter from toponyms and the identification of large units in recent surveys. *CIL* 8.25943 and 26416, two Commodian inscriptions quote a *sermo* of Hadrian on Mancian agreements on some estates, referred to as a prejudicating case. The *saltus Lamianus* and *Domitianus* are described as located next to the *Thusdritanus* (which Kehoe 2007: 69 emends to *Thuszritanus*, in order to be able to locate it in the Northeast). It also mentions the *saltus Blandianus* and *Udens*, without specifying location. The *Neronianus* is mentioned in the part of the text that dates to Commodus and concerned with the case at hand, and is likely located in the Northeast.

<sup>589</sup> “..in Africa ... private individuals have estates no less extensive than the territory belonging to communities. Indeed many estates are far bigger than territories. Moreover, private individuals have on their estates a not insubstantial population from the lower orders, and villages scattered around their country house (villa) rather like municipia.” Agennius Urbicus, *De controversiis agrorum*, Campbell 2000: 42-3.

<sup>590</sup> See chapter II pp. 96-100. The important ARS C producing center El-Guellal, which has been called a “major agro town” (Fentress *et al.* 2004: 158) cannot even be named, much less have its prosopography reconstructed.

must have played a major part in initiating production.<sup>591</sup> Mackensen suggested a similar model for the enormous production of ceramics at Sidi Marzouk Tounsi, and argued that elite owners built the furnaces and supplied silver models for the molds.<sup>592</sup> The sites surveyed by Hitchner's team around *Cillium* revealed a hierarchic pattern with large central units surrounded by modest steads, as does, according to a recent survey, the enormous *Saltus Beguenses*, one of few estates for which an owner can be named, a well-connected senator. This comes as no surprise, as the combination of a centralized site pattern and huge investments points to agents in possession of considerable wealth.<sup>593</sup> Yet it is often argued that the economic development was initiated from below by independent farmers, based on the assumption that tenancy agreements were the norm on private estates, as attested on some imperial counterparts.<sup>594</sup> I have already expressed doubts about this, seeing that all our information comes from an imperial context.<sup>595</sup> Peyras' study on the imperial estate *Fundus Aufidianus* revealed a different settlement pattern with units equal in size. Survey data from the likewise imperial *Saltus Massipiani* shows a similar organization, suggestive of independent sharecroppers. Its presses, although certainly capacious, were less industrial than the enormous "jumelle" rigs known from the centralized estates.<sup>596</sup> The imperial *Fundus Iubaltianenses* is known to have had a proto-town organization led by *magistri* who were free men. This is not to suggest that all imperial estates were organized in this fashion – there

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<sup>591</sup> Mattingly 1988: 48, 53, as well as 1993: 284. Likewise Ben Baaziz 2003a: 203.

<sup>592</sup> Mackensen 2009b: 39-40.

<sup>593</sup> *Saltus Beguenses* at one point received *nundinae* through the agency of a high senator and his ex-consul friends (*CIL* 8.270).

<sup>594</sup> E.g. Mattingly 1997: 123, 125-6.

<sup>595</sup> See chapter II p. 99, esp. n. 235. The only evidence for Mancian farming arrangements on private estates is 200 years later than Diocletian, and in fact postdates the empire.

<sup>596</sup> Oil presses at *Saltus Massipiani*: Ben Baaziz 2003a: 204. Hobson 2012: 129 on its less centralized settlement structure. *Fundus Aufidianus* (see above p. 247 n. 581) where a 3rd c. *colonus* made improvements; see Peyras 1975, followed by Kehoe 1988: 230-233.



may have been several models in operation – but, judging by the level of autonomy in evidence, they do seem to have offered more scope for initiative than private estates, at least to a certain class of farmers.<sup>597</sup> Private estates have not produced anything comparable, I would tentatively suggest that the norm for these was a more hierarchical arrangement.

State involvement in export trades is usually seen as limited to tax measures and transports, but it pays to remember that the *res privata* was involved at every stage of the process. It relied on fairly independent local agents, who were often members of the decurionates of local towns, as far as we know predominantly in the periphery. One may recall the procurator Macer at *Hippo Regius*, center for a *regio* for the management of imperial properties on the Northwestern plain, and the *conductores* and *coloni* who dedicated to him.<sup>598</sup> A local man climbing through *res privata* posts, he was of high standing but by no means on a par with the senators of Carthage. The *conductores* would also have come from local towns, perhaps not as eminent as *Ammaedara* where Macer hailed from, but they were certainly no paupers. The managerial structure of imperial estates was thus integrated with the municipal networks, and the more humble *coloni* could also be active on both sides of the line. The farmer at *Fundus Aufidianus* was a decurion in nearby *Bihensi Bilta*, roles that frequently overlap.<sup>599</sup> There were certainly imperial properties in all the areas involved in the export productions, ubiquitous in the *Gamonía* where Sidi Marzouk Tounsi, the prime site for ARS C production, was located (and for which imperial ownership

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<sup>597</sup> See chapter II on epigraphic practices on imperial estates, beyond *Saltus Massipiani* and *Fundus Iubaltianenses* also *Masclianae* on the High Steppe. Kehoe 2007: 51-2 contrasts private and imperial ownership, seeing more modest but less stratified units on imperial such.

<sup>598</sup> See chapter II, nn. 205, 227.

<sup>599</sup> Kehoe 1988: 90-92 on *coloni* on imperial estates also cultivating self-owned plots.

should not be excluded). This area also saw considerable production of oil.<sup>600</sup> The obviously imperial *Vicus Augusti* was one of the main production sites in the region of *Thysdrus* with several kilns producing oil amphoras, and *Thysdrus* itself was closely connected to imperial authorities judging by its epigraphic record.<sup>601</sup> That the fisc had economic interests in the Sahel is shown also by the fact that a procurator of the *res privata* had his seat at *Hadrumentum*.<sup>602</sup>

That said, less is known about the people involved with coastal productions than those inland due to the poor record of epigraphy. The absence of towns from the Sahel – revealed not only by this lack but through surveys – suggests that its farmers were more heavily dependent, perhaps pointing to more widespread private than imperial ownership; in any case, no tendency is visible for modest landowners, managers or sharecroppers to form townships, as seen in the interior. Herodian's account on the revolt of Gordian I describes scions of elite families in the area as ordering "their peasants" to attack, which suggests a degree of dependency.<sup>603</sup> It is highly likely that the rural hinterland was dominated by elites based in the coastal towns, engaged in economic ventures alongside those of the state and capitalizing on the system created by the needs of army and Rome, but which had gained its own momentum. It is often assumed that

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<sup>600</sup> In favor of imperial ownership of Sidi Marzouk Tounsi can be mentioned that its *vicus* appears to have featured an arch, and thus had some urban features and engaged in honorifics.

<sup>601</sup> No local officeholders figure among its builders or honorands, but only emperors (*AE* 1991.1635, Vespasian building aqueduct) or imperial officials (curators: *ILAfr.* 44, *CIL* 8.51, proconsul: *ILAfr.* 43) and career equestrians (*CIL* 8.10500-1). It is perhaps no coincidence that Gordian I had a residence there when serving as proconsul.

<sup>602</sup> So M'Charek 1999: 140. For the northern Sahel, see above n. 576. A sibling of *regio Hadrumentina* comprised the Northwestern region and had its seat at *Hippo Regius*, an area which also saw much building activity under Diocletian, but which has regrettably not been the subject of systematic surveys, and so will not figure much in this discussion. The *tractus Karthaginis* was likely coterminus with the *pertica*, reaching as far as *Pupput*; see Ben Abdallah *et al.* 2003.

<sup>603</sup> So Kehoe 1988: 75. Herodian *Hist.* 7.4.3-2, describes farm laborers as required to take up arms on the bidding of their masters, the young aristocrats who were responsible for the uprising.

senatorial elites were involved, and I believe this to be likely. What little of the prosopography of the Byzacena ports that is known points to the presence of senators, with ties to the Carthaginian nobility.<sup>604</sup> Amphora stamps at times include the names of senators, and patterns of distribution (especially of fish products) bear witness to a multitude of connections, local and long distance, of which far from all passed through the city of Rome.

The degree to which the manual workforce on estates were free is impossible to establish, either on centralized units such as the *Saltus Beguenses* or those run by independent *coloni*, who were by no means the bottom of the social pyramid.<sup>605</sup> The poster child for free and flexible rural entrepreneurs in the wake of the “African wonder,” the Harvester of Maktar, began his rural *cursus* a few steps up the social ladder – though proudly declaring that he rose from a simple laborer working on the estates of others before becoming a landowner and decurion, his dog years were spent as manager over other harvesters, not at the very bottom of the rural hierarchy, of which we know precious little. The only individuals we can actually detect in available sources are those able to harbor aspirations, that is, people of some means and independence.

#### *Aristobulus, Sossianus and the rural communities*

The arena for these aspirations, clearly expressed by what the Harvester describes as the pinnacle of his success, remained the town (at least under Diocletian), and his case is a good reminder that estates do not offer the whole story for the “African wonder,” especially not on the High Tell where he settled. This area is less given over to massive units but is quite as active as an export

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<sup>604</sup> Corbier 1982: 695; 718-21 mentions senatorial families based in *Hadrumetum*, with marriage unions across the province, and suggests that the ports of Byzacena were an arena for high elites.

<sup>605</sup> Ørsted 1993: 120-121 argues that even the sharecroppers were not entirely free but strongly dependent on the *conductores* for offloading their yield, in the absence of an open market.

producer as the High Steppe, housing also the most prolific ARS C kilns. It had a larger share of nucleated settlements than the rest of Byzacena, villages which increasingly appear as towns in their own right under Diocletian, as shown by the map of oil production and locations with building epigraphy above. The few towns that did exist on the High Steppe also became active, such as *Sufetula*, *Thala* and *Sufes* (which has its first building inscription) with statues also at *Thelepte*, *Cillium* and *Capsa*, as did the string of colonies bordering the area to the West. At no other point in time is the urban network of the periphery so visible.

An indication of the degree to which the farming population was autonomous is their ability to act as a collective, and defend their interests against other communities, against the state, and I believe most pressing, against large estate owners in their vicinity. Essentially, the towns *were* farmers, prosperous enough to be able to organize themselves as towns but far from the scale that must be envisioned for the massive establishments on the High Steppe or in the Sahel.<sup>606</sup> Laboring for wealthy and well-connected senatorial landowners may have offered good opportunities for those without means, but modest landowners would likely find better leverage through collective action. This was possible as a town, alternatively as a group of *coloni* through the bureaucracy of the *res privata*, which offered a structure of rights and responsibilities that allowed for formal complaints in ways that private estate owners did not. That the interests of farmers and the imperial government coincided in the provincial township is suggested not only by the frequent overlap of fisc and municipality in terms of personnel outlined above, but also in the phenomenon of town formation from estates, which, as far as I am aware, is known only for

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<sup>606</sup> The inscription from *Lamasba* (CIL 8.4440), which lists the distribution of water rights to more than 80 *coloni*, may serve as an example. Shaw 1982 interprets the names as independent landowners making up the community of *Lamasba*, both those prominent enough to enter the *ordo* and the smallholders who made up the *plebs*.

imperial estates. This offers a way to understand the tendency toward urbanization in rural areas notable under Diocletian, a process that seems actively supported by the administration. The restoration of the Pluto temple in just such an aspiring estate community, *Fundus Iubaltianensis*, was sped on by imperial initiative, seeing that an active role was played by an imperial *arcarius*.

The presence and role of the rural townships in an area of economic development is an issue of great importance, both for the society and economy of the region and for the attitude towards it of the Diocletianic administration. Judging by the building inscriptions associated with Aristobulus and Sossianus it seems that such rural townships were of rising significance at the time, at least in the eyes of the state. More of them entered the network and became visible, both through their own efforts at building and through imperial construction, or combinations of the two.<sup>607</sup> Whether we interpret the activities of Aristobulus and Sossianus as attempts at control or support, it is clear that these communities received more than their usual share of attention from central authorities. Not only was the Diocletianic administration active in municipalities in areas where few such are in evidence, targeting previously unnoticed rural communities for imperial projects and furnishing them with structures key to the recognition as a town, but it also seems to have created new ones. This is argued by Lepelley, whose example is *Civitas Faustianensis* in Byzacena, a name which betrays its previous life as an estate (a status corroborated by later finds by Ahmed M'Charek).<sup>608</sup> It was likely once a senatorial property, owned by the Severan general

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<sup>607</sup> This vitality of the African towns has led Bransbourg 2008: 286 to argue that the fiscal reform of Diocletian, which he claims was a blow to city finances, was not applied in Africa until after his retirement. As he argues for 287 as the date of the reform, this implies a delay of 18 years, in a province crucial for agrarian production and ruled for 8 consecutive years by two of the closest henchmen of the emperors, which seems unlikely. Either the reform was not conceived as early as the 280's, or did not have the consequences for the towns that he argues for.

<sup>608</sup> Lepelley 2001f; M'Charek 2003.

*Quintus Anicius Faustus*, but had long since passed to the fisc. *Saltus Massipiani* also appears as a municipality for the first time under Diocletian (although the date for the elevation from estate is unknown). It is not improbable that the mention of Aristobulus as *inventor* refers to an active role in its promotion.<sup>609</sup> A row of further creations have been attributed to Diocletian, such as *Civitas Vitensis*, *Ziqua* and *Villa Magna* in the region of *Segermes*, the emergence of which Carlsen tied to the presence of imperial properties in the area.<sup>610</sup>

Towns were not only created from estates but through subdividing large territories into independent units, as has been suggested for the *Cirta* confederation, dissolved into autonomous units at the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. The event is usually attributed to Diocletian, as is the promotion of *Thibilis* in its territory.<sup>611</sup> A similar fate may have befallen the territory of *Mactaris*, which was very large, and where several towns appear as such for the first time. Ben Baaziz has argued for a Diocletianic promotion of *Mididi*, which may be the case for some other locations as well such as *Thugga Terebenthina*, *Cit...* and *Civitas A...*, as well as the anonymous township of modern Ellès.<sup>612</sup> A concern with breaking down larger units and decentralizing, as well as promoting, is evident. The tendency is contemporaneous with, and reminiscent of, the decentralization of the

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<sup>609</sup> *IL Afr.* 90; see chapter IV n. 478. The latest dateable inscription before Diocletian stems from the reign of Septimius Severus, when it was still an estate.

<sup>610</sup> Carlsen 2000, noting strong imperial presence in the region; also Ørsted 1998: 171. The area was marginal, and represents another example of urbanization in outlying regions. Outside Africa, the promotion of *Tymandus* in Pisidia (*CIL* 3.6866, 6867) is usually dated to Diocletian.

<sup>611</sup> The dissolution of the confederation, consisting of the colonies *Cirta*, *Rusicade*, *Milev* and *Chullu* and their associated dependent communities, was fact at the time of the persecutions, and Lepelley argues for a Diocletianic date. Gsell suggested the promotion of *Thibilis*, defended by Lepelley 1979: 65, 123-4.

<sup>612</sup> For *Mididi*, see Lepelley 2001f: 135, and Ben Baaziz 2000: 136. *Mactaris* had dominated the High Tell for centuries, as metropolis of no less than 64 *pagi* in the royal Numidian districts of *Thusca* and *Gunzuzi* (*AE* 1963.96).

provincial administration, placing a curator in each small town rather than on a regional basis, selected from the local councils (and likely also by them, as was to become the norm).

For the municipality, having its own curator rather than being subsumed under the district of a metropolis may have been a matter of independence quite as much as it was a one of control on the part of the state, and it is not impossible that they themselves petitioned to have them. If Lepelley is correct in arguing that Diocletian abolished the differences in status between towns, this may also have helped smaller towns assert themselves against colonies of long standing.<sup>613</sup> The process of promoting an estate to a town, according to Lepelley, was to transform the managerial stratum into an *ordo*.<sup>614</sup> That this “farming elite” was close in standing to small town decurionates has already been suggested, forming a class of some means but not on their own able to withstand the more prominent elite strata. It needs to be remembered that the process is at least assumed to have been one of petition and response – the communities desired independent status, which provided leverage as well as a springboard for further careers for themselves and their offspring, while the power exercised by the state was one of selective response. That the administration of Diocletian seems to have been liberal in this regard shows again a coincidence in interests on the part of the more comfortable segment of the farming population and of the state, which could capitalize on the aspirations of the former. It seems apparent that the state desired to keep as much as possible of the rural landscape of Africa small scale and independent, with the moderately sized town the preferred model for social and economic organization.

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<sup>613</sup> Lepelley 2001g.

<sup>614</sup> Lepelley 2001f: 133.

The concern may have been one of countering the concentration of resources in the hands of magnates, of the kind active in the export trade productions.<sup>615</sup> It is noteworthy that *Cuttilula*, a small town in the *Gamonía* which had its first (and only) building project inscribed through the agency of Sossianus, was connected to the powerful senatorial family of the *Anicii* who owned estates there.<sup>616</sup> Encouraging municipal activity may reflect an attempt at making inroads into aristocratic land. It appears that elite estate owners were adverse to town formation on their land, and Kehoe among others blames them for the slow urbanization (in terms of formally recognized municipalities) in the upper Medjerda valley.<sup>617</sup> We have seen that it was rare in Africa for senatorial landowners to enter into euergetic relationships with the communities on their estates, or that farmers on private estates dedicated structures or statues in the manner seen on their imperial counterparts.<sup>618</sup> I have already mentioned the rarity of townships in the Sahel. A case in point is the almost complete absence of towns from senatorial Sicily, which suggests that the farmers there were more at the mercy of their masters than in Africa.<sup>619</sup> Sicily is the only Italian region that has not generated any epigraphy dating to Diocletian. The support of townships, it seems, represented a tug-of-war with the senatorial stratum, with farmers in the balance. Depending on one's view of their prosperity and liberty, one can either see in this as an attempt by the state to stave off impending dependency on magnates, or, if we accept Kehoe's position

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<sup>615</sup> Kehoe 1988: 20 arguing that the state had a vested interest in curbing private landowners.

<sup>616</sup> *AE* 2003.1977, an unknown construction project by the *Cuttilulenses* initiated by *Sossianus*. *AE* 1969/79 46b, *AE* 1969/70 47a statues to the wives of two *Anicii*. The family held estates at nearby *Uzappa*, and the statues argue for a presence here also.

<sup>617</sup> Kehoe 1988: 11-12, remarking that the dependence of the area is unusual. Dondin-Payre 1990: 338, with further reference to Kolendo & Kotula 1977.

<sup>618</sup> See chapter II pp. 95-6. Absentee landowners are rarely visible in the honorific landscape and are known mainly from toponyms; the few exceptions are Africans, e.g. *Sextus Pullaienus*.

<sup>619</sup> For a comparison of ownership in North Africa and Sicily, Fentress *et al.* 2004: 160-161.



that land was more abundant than farmers and that the latter thus had options, as competition for the skilled workforce through incentives. The “African wonder” would have put a premium on the competent farmer, and the new tax system based on units of land may have had many owners in a hurry to man their estates.<sup>620</sup>

No doubt the most immediate, and crass, priority for the state was to secure tax revenue. A related concern may have been that a more diverse and small scale agrarian landscape was seen as more productive. The rural demography of Africa, with its miscellany of ownership and leasing arrangements, seems to have been considerably more creative than aristocratic Sicily, which showed no initiative to produce secondary cargoes in spite of the same potential by way of state transports.<sup>621</sup> Ben Baaziz has argued that the social structure of the Sahel, with roots going back to pre-Roman times, was adverse to innovation which kept oleiculture in the region from reaching export volumes.<sup>622</sup> The state had a more pressing need to maximize yields, to feed armies and Rome, and also safeguard the towns themselves from the social turmoil that resulted

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<sup>620</sup> Kehoe 1988: 71-72, 84-87 on abundance of land and dearth of workforce; 79 on competition between fisc and private estate owners for the workforce, forcing both to provide favorable conditions; 90-94 on incentives on part of the state to keep farmers on its estates, based mainly on the *leges*. Mattingly 1988: 51 concurs, adding that landowners had to provide some scope for self-improvement. Further on competition for farmers, Kehoe 2007: 85-9, with reference to examples from Asia Minor of *coloni* who threatened to abandon their farms if their complaints were not respected. Ørsted 1993: 120 argues that the *coloni* on the *Saltus Burunitanus*, after their first appeal to the emperor had failed, threatened to leave the estate.

<sup>621</sup> See above, n. 619. On diversity also Mattingly 1997: 124. Several authors have presented similar arguments about a conservative aristocracy and more entrepreneurial lower strata. Tamara Lewit (Lewit 2007: 135-6) in her study on the technology of oil presses argues that aristocratic, often absentee landlords are less ready to optimize yield and embrace new technology than independent moderate-scale farmers, who are more prone to invent and invest.

<sup>622</sup> For the Sahel, Ben Baaziz 1999: 46; for the interior, Ben Baaziz 2003: 217. By contrast, he claims that the novel high capacity methods adopted in the interior were introduced by imperial estates and by the descendants of veterans in the colonies along the West, agents who were more adventurous than the old aristocracies.

from famines (and hoarding aristocrats).<sup>623</sup> A similar rationale has been suggested for the mass of boundary stones marking the territories of Syrian communities, an initiative presented by the texts as belonging to the Tetrarchic emperors, by way of *censitores*. Apart from the fact that they represent a unique level of visibility of the imperial government in the agrarian landscape, they testify to a concern with cultivating marginal lands. The texts are usually seen as a consequence of the new tax system, necessitating close assessment of ownership of land, but Zvi Uri Ma'oz has pointed out that they only appear in areas previously unsettled, in the case of his article the northern slopes of the Hauran which is not an area that lends itself to farming.<sup>624</sup> The toponyms are known only from these texts, and as in Africa include examples that appear to be (or to have once been) estates. He argues for a conscious attempt to support rural communities in an outlying area, with the new municipality *Maximianopolis* created from the old *Sakkaia* as its regional center. The aim was likely to secure the alimentation of the armies, seeing that much of the taxes in question were paid in kind.<sup>625</sup> This shows the importance placed on the rural community under

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<sup>623</sup> Kehoe 1988: 76. The fisc had as its main objective to maximize output, and was free to ignore market prices or transport costs.

<sup>624</sup> Ma'oz 2006, with maps and a list of toponyms. The project seems a failed one, with only a third of the settlements surviving for any length of time after Diocletian, and these also abandoned in the 6th c. Most cannot be dated closer than to 293-305, but some to 296-7.

<sup>625</sup> So Millar 1993: 197, suggesting the land-tax was paid in kind. Like Maurice Sartre he ties the stones to the tax reform, as does Corcoran 2000: 176 who claims it “shows the administrative system at its detailed best.” Syrian land development projects under Diocletian are known from rabbinic texts, among them dams at Homs and Apamea (mentioned in *yKetubot* 12.3.35b). Another grand attempt at reclaiming agricultural lands is the draining by Galerius of large tracts of the new Balkan province Valeria (Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 40). The construction of *Via Herculia* in Lucania (see Buck 1971), where Maximian reportedly settled, may also have had an eye to economic development, as the points it connected already were so by means of a major road. This, to me, suggests that its aim was to integrate the area it passed through, a remote pastoralist region close to two Diocletianic weaving mills listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*. The palace at Split has been revealed to have functioned as a *fabrica*; Nikšić 2011.

Diocletian's reign, and how the insertion of a civic and fiscal structure went hand in hand. As in Africa, pains were taken to ensure that imperial attention was broadcast, even at the village level.

The theme of the rural community has recently been treated in a study by Leslie Dossey.<sup>626</sup> Her main concern is with periods later than mine, but aspects of her work have points in common with this study, and it is notable that she dates significant developments to the Diocletianic era. Using lists of bishoprics in Africa dating to the mid 3rd and early 5th c. respectively, she traces a development where the town became replaced by the rural see as the basis for social organization in Byzacena and Numidia, a situation that seems unique to Africa.<sup>627</sup> She views the creation of new townships by emperors as a continuous phenomenon, and thus considers those of Diocletian as comparable to municipalization during the 2nd c.<sup>628</sup> She brands this "extension of self-governance to villages," something which was in the interest of emperors as well as the farmers. Although believe this to be true for Diocletian, it is important to note the differences between his town creations and those of Antonine or Severan emperors. All Severan creations were located in the Northeast, and all were towns already in all but name, often since pre-Roman times. The same is true of almost all earlier creations as well; even most of the Flavian colonies in the West were originally native towns, such as *Thubursicu Numidarum*. There is no tendency to promote villages to town status, and there are no creations from estates. Nor is there a continuum of the practice through the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. The Northeastern promotions likely aimed at limiting the influence of Carthage, or were simply responses to petitions without any agenda on the part of the state. The only good comparanda are the inscriptions mentioned in the previous two chapters that derives

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<sup>626</sup> Dossey 2010. Quote on p. 125.

<sup>627</sup> Dossey 2010: 125-144. For sees represented at the synod of 256, Duval 1984, map fig. 1 p. 504, and list of toponyms p. 505; for the sees attested in 411; Lancel 1972-1991.

<sup>628</sup> Dossey 2010: 112.

from the area of *Sitifis* in the 230's and 240's, and which suggest that the state actively supported town formation from villages and estates.<sup>629</sup> It is likely no coincidence that these are also the only texts that bear any resemblance to the Diocletianic examples in formulas and application.

Dossey rightly observes that town formation comes to an end after Diocletian, which she takes as a sign of lack of interest, or suppression, from above. Although some of this silence should be put down to the lack of epigraphy generally, which is the medium through which we know about towns, the emergence of rural communities formed around *ecclesiae*, which are based on estates rather than on *municipia*, is surely significant.<sup>630</sup> Dossey interprets these rural sees as a new vehicle for collective action, and I agree, although I reject that this is necessarily a sign that the farmers were henceforth unable to form townships. Their distribution interestingly follows much the same outlines as the active of Aristobulus and Sossianus, non-centralized and concentrated on the periphery, with a far lower frequency noted in the Northeast than there ought to have been seeing the density of settlement.<sup>631</sup> Her explanation for this is the greater clout of the high status primate of Carthage, able to hold back the ambition of the *plebes*.<sup>632</sup> Interpreting survey data as evidence of economic surpluses for the first time trickling down to non-elites, she

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<sup>629</sup> See chapter III p. 138, chapter IV p. 210. Kehoe 2007: 50 sees them as evidence of the state working to create private, taxable property.

<sup>630</sup> To argue, as does Dossey 2010:120, that rural magistrates “had difficulty getting their acts recorded in conspicuously public texts like inscriptions or in prescriptive laws” is to ignore the sharp shift in the epigraphic habit notable past Diocletian.

<sup>631</sup> Even discounting the fact that fewer communities in the area remained unpromoted; Dossey 2010: 128-130. Of sees formed post Diocletian, two thirds were formed around estates, judging by the toponyms. The sees attested in 256 were predominantly based on municipalities, while among those of 411 are many with the *-iana* ending, or named as *fundus*, *saltus* or *villa*. Duval 1984: 512-4 argues that already in the early 3rd c., rural “agglomerations” without city status could have a bishop. However, her examples are the bishoprics within the as yet undissolved confederation of *Cirta*. These locations were *de facto* towns (if not *de iure*), and not estates.

<sup>632</sup> Dossey 2010: 130.

sees the development as one sparked from below, by an increasingly independent farming population empowered by their newfound wealth and eager for recognition.<sup>633</sup> With the African economy, thus, rose the African farmer, eventually leading to conflicts with elites who were intent on keeping their social distance.<sup>634</sup>

Although I agree with most of the above, I am not convinced by her characterization of the social groups involved, neither the risers nor those who would oppose them. She describes a development where “rustics” clash with town dwellers, while I would see in the rising “rustics” the same stratum of farmers that make their mark through the type of small townships noted in my material, rather than the bottom of the rural hierarchy. In those opposing their ambitions I would not see the decurionates of the mass of African towns, but the higher nobility, landowning senators based in Carthage and (perhaps) on the coast of Byzacena. The areas where the bishoprics appear in plenty were in fact never much urbanized, and the paucity of town creations does not represent a departure from the norm of the high empire; what is new is the degree of recognition brought by the sees, and that farmers seem to have used this platform for collective action. I do agree with her that important changes occur under Diocletian that favored the emergence of the peasantry as independent agents, among them the release from dependency on the Northeast (which I take to mean the province divisions).<sup>635</sup> I also agree that the state and the

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<sup>633</sup> Dossey 2010: 8 ...“a spread to the countryside of objects and cultural forms previously exclusive to towns.” From the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. a wider subset of the rural population gained access to finewares through local imitations of export wares, with the consequence that they become visible in the surveys – the increase in settlement suggested by survey data is, according to her, rather an increase in rural wealth (pp. 32-4). As with epigraphy, thus, silence does not in itself prove absence of activity, only that the activity leaves no permanent, or dateable, traces.

<sup>634</sup> Dossey 2010: 60-61.

<sup>635</sup> Dossey 2010: 89 on the liberation of Central Tunisia and Numidia from the Northeast. Pp. 63-90 provides a timeline for all her main indicators, with a modest start in the mid- to late 3rd c.

farmer were in agreement, though I would see the towns as the places where their interests converge, not where they encounter opposition. I would thus like to turn the table over and argue that instead of posing a threat to the functionality of the Roman towns, the imperial state took on the role of their active defender. The duty of the imperial governor to “raise up cities” listed by Menander Rhetor as part of the Platonic virtue of “justice” did perhaps not only refer to construction, but to a perceived role that the state should protect and promote towns.<sup>636</sup> The danger came instead from the higher gentry – international, wealthy and well connected, at liberty to ignore the legal framework put in place by a succession of emperors to safeguard the viability of provincial towns. They do not represent the local benefactors who are usually argued to have sustained their communities, but a more powerful stratum whose aims and loyalties were directed elsewhere, concentrated in the most metropolitan setting, that is, in Carthage.

## **V.2 The state and social strata: the reach of the reforms**

The role of the Tetrarchic emperors as propagators and protectors of the town is poignantly expressed in the quadriportico at Autun described by the orator Eumenius, each side of the city square flanked by depictions of an emperor at war – their zeal literally provided the prerequisites for civic life.<sup>637</sup> The same messages are expressed in the inscriptions found in the African towns: civic institutions exist due to the tireless activity and care of the emperors.

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followed by an upswing from c. 300. The Carthage survey shows the sharpest rise, but growth also takes off c. 300 in the surveys of *Thugga*, *Sufetula* and *Cillium*. For a contrary view, Carr 2009: 106-7 who interprets imitation wares at *Leptiminus* as a sign of poverty, suggesting that the locals were replacing previously used (unattested) glass or metal tablewares with ceramics.

<sup>636</sup> Menander Rhetor 416.10; see chapter III n. 398.

<sup>637</sup> Eumenius *Pan Lat IX* (=4) 21.1-3., Frakes 2009: 42-43 on the significance of quadriporticoes as miniature models of the world, in this case encircled by the tireless valor of the emperors.

The same role of the state as defender of the townships, often against encroachment by magnates, is eminently visible in administrative sources. For instance, the theme was exploited as a *captatio benevolentiae* in 4th c. petitions, preserved in Egyptian papyri. Several petitioners who file their complaints with the governor state their cases as an opposition between upright, taxpaying citizens (such as themselves) who fulfill all public duties in their towns, and powerful elite individuals who operate outside the civic framework. Their great wealth enables them to ignore the law, and to lure farmhands to join them.<sup>638</sup> In the address, the person of the governor is identified with the law, the only recourse for the humble against the hubris of the arrogant super rich.<sup>639</sup> These are topic formulas, belonging to the standard repertoire of the scribes who assisted petitioners in formulating their appeals. As such, they have an interest in that they reflect a rhetoric current in the communications between state and subject, one that frames the government as defenders of the everyman.

A typical example addressed to a Diocletianic prefect describes the force through which the petitioner, who has been driven to seek refuge with him due to intolerable, unlawful hubris (*τὸ τῆς ὑβρεως παράνομον*), expects the governor to act as *πρόνοια*, the Greek equivalent of *providentia*.<sup>640</sup> This virtue, which as we have seen appeared in epigraphy as well, and always in an imperial context, is common in administrative sources as well, and particularly under

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<sup>638</sup> Two 4<sup>th</sup> c. examples are *P.Sakaon* 44 (331-2 CE) and *P.Kell.* 23 (353 CE).

<sup>639</sup> The Late Antique governors became known as *iudices*, judges, a word very common in the Theodosian Code. The topos of the humble upright as the salt of the earth, the governors as the embodiment of law and their only protection against the villainous rich, can be seen in a number of Diocletianic examples. The most commonly quoted are *P.Cair.Isid.* 70 and *P.Kell.* 21 with very similar formulas, and *P.Oxy.* 34.2713 which was addressed to the same Aristius Optatus who quoted the taxation edict of 297. Worp 1995; Parássoglou 1978, with review by Bagnall 1980; Papathomas 2007 on *gnomen* used in petitions, used throughout the imperial period but rising in quantity toward the late 3rd c. to become very common in the 4th.

<sup>640</sup> *PSI* 4.298, dating to 292-3.

Diocletian. Another petitioner brings his complaint to the *πρόνοια* of an official, probably the prefect for whom the term appears to have been a standing epithet.<sup>641</sup> As in epigraphy, the same applies to the emperors, and in particular when active in administrative matters. The term appears in the taxation edict quoted by Aristius Optatus, which describes the emperors as “the most foreseeing emperors,” *οἱ προνοητικώτατοι Αὐτοκράτορες*.<sup>642</sup> An edict from 301 circulated by the prefect Clodius Culcianus presents the ruling as by “the divine foresight of the all-conquering emperors,” *ἡ θεία πρόνοια τῶν πάντα νεικόντων Αὐτοκρατόρων*, thus as in the inscriptions combining the concept with military virtue.<sup>643</sup> There are, in fact, several similarities between the building inscriptions and the way the government is presented in administrative sources, quite as much in its own communications as when petitioned to by locals. The preamble of the Prices Edict invokes the same universality as expressed in the inscriptional formula, with repeated appeals to the sentiments of all, presenting the labor of the emperors as undertaken for the good of every citizen: ... *m[ax]ime cum e<iu>s modi statuto non civitatibus singulis ac populis adque provinciis, sed universo orbi provisum esse videatur*.<sup>644</sup> One may note the use of

<sup>641</sup> *P.Louvre* 2.117, dating to 301.

<sup>642</sup> E.g. Prices Edict 86-7: *Sed iam etiam ipsas causas, quarum necessitas tandem providere diu prolatam patientiam compulit, explicare debemus...*, “But now we ought to explain the very causes, the urgency of which at last drives our long-delayed patience to take action...”; 120-1: ... *vilitatis beatitudine, cui maxime providetur...*, “...the blessing of low prices, which is very much the object of our care and foresight...”; 46-8: ... *ad commune omnium temperamentum remediis provisionis nostrae comferatur*, “...that the remedies of our provisions may contribute to the temperance of all.” Versions of *prospicere* also appear; 44-45: ... *convenit prospicientibus nobis, qui parentes sumus generis humani*, “we who exercise forethought and who are the parents of the human race decided...”; 50: ... *paene sera prospectio est*, “provision ... is almost too late.” On the frequent use of *providentia* in Diocletianic communications, see also Corcoran 2000: 209-10. For the Aurelius Optatus edict, see chapter I p. 18 n. 22.

<sup>643</sup> *P.Oxy.* 31.2558, dating to the last years of the First Tetrarchy, or possibly to the Second.

<sup>644</sup> Prices Edict 145-150: *Cohortamur ergo omnium devotionem, ut res constituta ex commodo publico benignis obsequiis et debita religione <custodi>atur, m[ax]ime cum e<iu>s modi statuto*



the verb *providere*, and variants of *providentia* appear no less than four times in the preamble, showing it was an integral part of governmental rhetoric of the age. The term is often translated as “foresight,” but reflects something more hands-on, always manifest in visible result – as active fulfillment of duty toward “our provincials,” *provinciales nostri*.<sup>645</sup> The idea that the emperors had duties toward the subject populations of the empire is emphasized, and reflects a shift in the relation between these two poles, a relation which may be labeled as *εὐνοία*. This term appears in both the Prices Edict and the letter of Optatus, and may be translated with “devotion,” a sentiment that is described as mutual.<sup>646</sup> Corcoran observes that the edict “seeks the approval of the reader,” lining them up on the emperor’s side against the evils they are trying to repress. The use of “the other” to this effect is evident both in the Prices Edict, with its threat of capital punishment against offenders, and in the edicts against the Manicheans and Christians.<sup>647</sup>

This rhetoric was not invented by Diocletian. In fact, the Egyptian papyri show that the language style was current far earlier, throughout Roman history and even beyond. The *πρόνοια* of prefects was appealed to in petitions already in the Antonine era, and a text from 64 BCE uses

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*non civitatibus singulis ac populis adque provinciis, sed universo orbi provisum esse videatur.* “Therefore we exhort the devotion of all, in order that what has been decided in consideration of common benefit be observed with benevolent obedience and due reverence, especially since with this manner of statute it should be seen to have been provided not for single towns, populations or provinces but for the entire world.” Further examples on 40-1: ...*fortunis omnium*...; 46-7:...*commune omnium temperamentum*...; 49:...*communis omnium conscientia*...; 94:...*communis omnium salus*....

<sup>645</sup> Prices Edict 84-5, “Dear provincials,” a rather striking vocative.

<sup>646</sup> Corcoran 2000: 246 on the frequent use of the term.

<sup>647</sup> Corcoran 2000: 207-8. The offenders are characterized as monstrous, wild and frenzied, barbarians attacking the *quies* and *tranquillitas* (i.e. the established social order) with their greed. Slootjes 2006: 60 also connects the meting out of harsh punishment with an aim to gratify the public, and quotes Libanius *Or.* 45.28 on his frustration with lenient governors who will not execute. Similarly Watson 1999: 154 argues that the crackdown on corrupt officials by Aurelian which earned him the name of cruel was likely welcome among more humble strata.

it as an epithet for a Ptolemaic dioketes, a financial official.<sup>648</sup> It is also used in communications issuing from the government, as shown by the edicts of the prefects Ti. Claudius Aquila (208-210) and L. Baebius Aurelius Iuncinus (212). The divine *πρόνοια* of the emperor has an active role in proclaiming officials in a document from the reign of Philip, and petitions from 250's include the same kind of formulaic appeals to the *πρόνοια* of the prefect as seen above, styling it as the one protection for the humble subject against the evilminded.<sup>649</sup> Many of these elements are present in the petition to Gordian III by the Scaptoparenians, appealing to his concern for villages in these “most prosperous and everlasting times,” which “contributes to the security of mankind,” explicitly through securing the villagers’ ability to pay taxes.<sup>650</sup> The rhetoric is not exclusive to the progressed empire. A text that frames the emperor as a divine force protecting the well-being of every citizen, in words associated more with the dominate than the principate, dates to Galba. The prefect includes the following in his edict to the Alexandrians: “being very fortunate, expect everything to be done for your salvation and enjoyment by the emperor Galba Augustus, who shines down from above, benefactor to the whole race of humankind ...”.<sup>651</sup> One may also note the *sermo* of Hadrian quoted in the *lex Manciana* inscriptions, which refers to the emperor’s *infatigabili cura per quam assidue humanis utilitatibus excubat*, “the tireless care with which he assiduoulsy kept watch over matters of utility to mankind,” reminiscent of the

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<sup>648</sup> BGU 8.1764, 64-44 BCE. 2nd c. petitions, e.g. BGU 11.2065, 145-7; P.Oxy. 2.237, 186.

<sup>649</sup> P.Oxy. 33.2664; P.Oxy. 12.1468 and 13.1337.

<sup>650</sup> MARE 138 from 238 CE; transl. Coleman-Norton & Bourne 1961: 230-1.

<sup>651</sup> PSI 4.298:14-18 ... ἵνα δὲ εὐθυμότεροι πάντα ἐλπίζετε παρὰ τοῦ ἐπιλάμπαντος ἡμῶν ἐπὶ σωτηρία τοῦ Σεβαστοῦ Αὐτοκράτορος Γάλβα τά τε πρὸς σωτηρίαν καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀπόλαυσιν... See also P.Oxy 4.705 (202 CE), addressing the emperors as “saviours and benefactors of all mankind,” τοῖς πάντων ἀνθρώπων σωτῆρσι καὶ εὐεργέταις, and IG 7.2711 (37 CE), 59-60 “when the fortunate and for all most blessed reign of the new emperor and god shone down from above;” καθ’ ὃν καιρὸν ἡ πᾶσιν μακαριωτάτῃ ἐπέλαμψεν ἡγεμονία τοῦ θεοῦ Σεβαστοῦ.

inscriptions from the Mauretanian *castella*.<sup>652</sup> The rhetorical language of the emperor's incessant care for the realm, and in particular for the humble, is thus far older, and appears predominantly (if not exclusively) in an administrative context.

What is new under Diocletian is a more systematic application of such formulas, not only by petitioners but by the emperors themselves, and what appears a conscious aim at making the administration of the provinces visible, in durable media. The circulation of the Prices Edict is a case in point. It was remarkably wide, reminiscent of the building inscriptions associated with Aristobulus and Sossianus. Fragments of it have been retrieved from almost 40 locations, some of which were administrative centers (Aphrodisias, Athens, Ptolemais), but several that were quite far off the beaten path.<sup>653</sup> An example is the tiny township of *Tamynai* (Aliveri) in Euboia, to where the publisher of the fragment postulated that it had to have been transported from the regional centre Eretria seeing the insignificance of the findspot.<sup>654</sup> The spread is not even, but shows deep penetration of certain provinces, while from most none have been retrieved at all – either the text was posted in all provinces but not in durable materials, which is the most likely (and most commonly embraced) scenario, or it was unique to certain provinces in the East. In either case, the areas where it *was* circulated are marked by a concern to post it in every township, significant or not.<sup>655</sup> The choice of medium may have been informed by the tradition

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<sup>652</sup> *CIL* 8.25043, *CIL* 8.25943. See above n. 629, chapter III p. 138, chapter IV p. 210.

<sup>653</sup> The main editions of the price edict are Lauffer 1971 and Giaccherio 1974. On later finds, Crawford and Reynolds 1975, Feissel 1995 and 1996. For a recent account, Crawford 2006.

<sup>654</sup> Doyle 1975. The author points out that all but one of the major centers of Euboia have produced fragments of the Prices Edict, and some of the less prominent towns as well. One might argue that Eretria (as indeed Euboia) was itself rather peripheral.

<sup>655</sup> All in all they can be associated with five individual governors who appear to have published the edicts this way, while others likely chose other media. Lactantius describes it in effect in Nicomedia, but no fragment have come to light from Bithynia. One fragment (from Pettorano)

of inscribing imperial responses in the Greek East, and if so, like the building inscriptions of Aristobulus and Sossianus, it represents a refitting of a long established but largely obsolete medium for a new use.<sup>656</sup> It may be that the change concerned the mode of publication rather than the juridical process. Feissel remarks that Diocletian was not the first to publish constitutions, but that the method of posting long texts in multiple copies, blanket fashion, is entirely novel.<sup>657</sup> That the wide circulation happened by order of the imperial administration is suggested by the explicit command in the edict of Aristius Optatus which accompanied the imperial taxation edict, charging the magistrates and leaders of the city councils with posting it in every village and even “places in general,” in order that the new legislation be speedily brought to the attention of all.<sup>658</sup> Earlier notes to the posting of edicts by emperors and governors are nowhere near so inclusive or emphatic, but tend to, at most, state “post in all prominent locations,” without rhetorical overtones.<sup>659</sup>

A concern with reaching deeper into the social pyramid can be noted in other aspects of the legal system as well, perhaps most clearly through the province divisions, which multiplied the number of governors, and the assignment of subaltern staff. The demand on the provincial Roman courts is assumed to have skyrocketed in the wake of 212, but there also appears to have

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has been found in the West, and its provenance has been the source of considerable discussion. Since it is in Greek, and quite small, it likely traveled there from an Eastern province.

<sup>656</sup> That actually viewing them was not always easy is suggested by Crawford 2006: 62, who has surveyed their placement and script. Though public, they were at times placed where they were not readily visible. Their main function was likely as authoritative copies, and they should be seen as imperially sanctioned, non-forgable guarantees, to be consulted only as a last resort.

<sup>657</sup> Feissel 1995: 33-4. See e.g. *lex de imperio Vespasiani*.

<sup>658</sup> P. Cair. Isid. 1.14-18: *προσετάχθησαν δὲ οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ οἱ προπολιτευόμενοι ἐκά[σ]της πόλεως καὶ τοῦ θείου διατάγματος μετὰ μεγάλου βρεοῦ τοῦ ἀντίγραφον ἔτι τε καὶ τούτου εἰς ἐκάστην κώμην εἴτ' οὖν τόπον ἀποστεῖλαι ὑπὲρ τοῦ εἰς γνώσιν ἀπάντων ἢ τάχο[ς] ἐλθεῖν τὴν μεγαλοδωρίαν τῶν Αὐτοκρατόρων ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν Καισάρων.*

<sup>659</sup> See Katzoff 1982 for posting orders.

been an effort on the part of the government to actively encourage recourse to Roman law.<sup>660</sup>

While the *iudices pedanei* – deputies of the governors authorized to handle minor cases – existed already before Diocletian, the *defensor civitatis* is likely an invention of his administration.<sup>661</sup> Its function was to pose as a link to the court of the governor for areas and groups that had little access to it, thus lowering the bar for who could participate. That this was its primary purpose is suggested by the modifications it underwent through the 4<sup>th</sup> c. While at first, the *defensor* simply collected petitions from locals and brought them to the attention of higher officials, Constantine made changes that aimed at making it cheaper to do so, and Valentinian imposed checks against locals holding the office, to ensure impartiality. All these steps betray a concern with serving the juridical needs of the sub-elite population.

Another novelty is the publication for the first time of legal codes, which according to Corcoran had a very wide circulation.<sup>662</sup> Providing authoritative guidelines to aid uniform and transparent adjudication, they represent something distinctly different from earlier juristic writing. Besides circulation, their content betrays something of their social aim, and the roles seen to be assumed by the emperors. Several rescripts express similar sentiments as the edicts

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<sup>660</sup> Roueché 1998: 32 suggests that the subdivisions aimed at relieving the overburdened governors, placing much emphasis on the effects of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* and maintaining that adjudication became the main task with which the Late Antique governor was occupied.

<sup>661</sup> The *terminus ante quem* for the *defensor civitatis* is the reign of Licinius, as attested in *P. Kell.* 21, where a petitioner in the decidedly peripheral Dakhleh oasis of Egypt asks that the *defensor* bring his complaint to the attention of the governor. A fragment from *Uthina* (*CIL* 8.24016) mentions a *defensor*, but Lepelley 1979: 193 questions whether he was of this kind. Extensively on the *defensores*, Frakes 2001. Diocletianic regulations in *CJ* 3.3 refer to the *iudices pedanei*. Lepelley 1981: 216 rejects the claim that they represent an encroachment on the juridical rights of towns. On the *iudices pedanei*, see also Corcoran 2000: 233. Roueché 1998: 34 (citing Liebeschuetz) stresses the importance of the growing cadre of provincial bureaucrats as those who held real competence for adjudication, while governors served rather short terms.

<sup>662</sup> Corcoran 2001: 41, 294. He also states that their publication was remarkably fast. For a description of the two Diocletianic codes and bibliography, see chapter I p. 18 n. 22.

and inscriptions. One that dates to the Dyarchy is *CJ* 9.41.8, which includes the phrase *hac enim ratione etiam universi provinciales nostri fructum ingenitae nobis benevolentiae consequentur*, “for on this reasoning, all our provincials will enjoy the fruit of our innate benevolence.”<sup>663</sup> The tone in the rescripts is otherwise not quite so grand, and compared to the fine writings of the jurists comes across as rather humdrum, both in style and content. This very circumstance is itself an indication of the social horizon involved – the petitioners who received rescripts from Diocletian were not people of rank but appear non-elite, although it should be noted that the widespread use of a single name often obscures their identity. No petitioner is of senatorial rank; in fact, in the three rescripts in total (out of more than 1,200) that mention senators, two feature them as opponents. In one, a woman has petitioned to be released from a contract with a senator on the grounds that she was coerced into it due to his higher status, and the other issue is similar.<sup>664</sup> While the level of wealth on the part of the petitioners cannot for the most part be determined, it is clear that it is the middling rather than the higher echelons of society that are visible, and the question is not how high a social horizon is visible, but how low. A significant portion are freed slaves, almost a third are women, while the third major group consists of decurions in provincial towns, of a motley array of professions.<sup>665</sup> The onomastics are inconclusive, but by far the most common are the *Aurelii*, reflecting recent citizenship, and a fair amount have names that are not Greek or Latin. Still, the majority of all cases deal with property,

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<sup>663</sup> Translation by Corcoran 2000: 129.

<sup>664</sup> *CJ* 2.19.6, 3.22.3. The only senatorial petitioner is also a woman (*CJ* 5.4.10), asking to keep her status after marrying an equestrian. Her senatorial status was itself only based on marriage.

<sup>665</sup> On the major groups engaging in litigation, Corcoran 2000: 97-119. He is surprised at the small number of rescripts to soldiers (11 out of c. 1,200) seeing how much time Diocletian spent at the frontier, and how frequent such responses were during the preceding period (81 for the period 211-284, out of a far smaller sample).

showing that the litigants were not destitute. Furthermore, to file a petition and await the answer involved travel, suggesting they had both means and time to spare. In the absence of specific sums that may provide an idea of how much was at stake for the petitioners, Corcoran uses as an indicator the frequent disputes over the ownership of a slave, which apparently was sufficient to make going through the process worthwhile.<sup>666</sup> What is clear is that Diocletian readily answered appeals from subjects of low status, even slaves. Corcoran rejects the view that the task was delegated to subordinates, and claims that Diocletian (and at times Maximian) himself dictated them. The mass of rescripts gives the impression of a highly accessible emperor, not enclosed in the ceremonial shroud usually associated with this reign.<sup>667</sup> If in a language less adorned than the preamble to the Prices Edict, they show the same insistence on the readiness and capability of imperial authorities to take on the role of protector of person and property of the populace.

### *Compliance and contention*

A more pompous tone is struck in the taxation edict, but it stresses the same close relation between emperor and the comparatively humble. The command to post it immediately and everywhere was informed by a desire that “all may as soon as possible be made aware of the great boon (of equitable taxation) provided by the emperors.” Whether the population at large saw it as a windfall or not may be discussed; in any case it is clear that loyal cooperation was

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<sup>666</sup> Corcoran 2000: 112 ff.

<sup>667</sup> Corcoran 2000: 255, 293 on the approachability of the Tetrarchs; also *CJ* 9.47.12, on an assizes held in public where the assembled audience attempted to intervene with the verdict. Although their appeal was ultimately rejected, the event shows that the emperor and the crowd had direct dealings. Corcoran (pp. 172-3) rejects the interpretation of the edict *de apellationibus* (*CJ* 7.62.6) as limiting access to the emperor. He argues (soundly, I believe) that it is rather an attempt to stave off frivolous appeals, quoting several passages in support of this view.

expected in return: the “great boon” would lead the provincials to “... make it their business in conformity with the divinely issued regulations to pay their taxes with all speed and by no means wait for the compulsion of the collector; for it is proper to fulfill most zealously and scrupulously all the loyal obligations...”<sup>668</sup> There are further examples of imperial pronouncements where expectations of compliance are couched in a language of harmony of goals between central authorities and the populace. One is a public announcement posted after a survey of irrigation systems, in which the farmers are asked to come forward with suggestions as to how to improve on it. In rather high-flying words it describes farmers, tax-collectors, and state as working together for the good of all. While insisting on cooperation, it is clear that “the common good” consists in paying taxes.<sup>669</sup>

A number of scholars have noted that an altruistic tone permeates the communications of the Diocletianic government, describing the measures with words such as “equitable,” “transparent,” and “fair.” Corcoran extracts from the legal codes an image of the emperors as protectors of the humble, which he considers largely sincere, while others are more skeptical.<sup>670</sup> Adams doubts the sincerity of the ditch announcement, as it was posted after the fact; he also

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<sup>668</sup> *P.Cair.Isid.* 1: 10-14, transl. N. Lewis.

<sup>669</sup> *P.Panop.Beatty* 2.222-8. “... I have now thought it appropriate in addition by public notice to appeal to the proprietors and farmers in all localities, and at the same time the Decemprimi ... asking that if they should consider any such measure profitable to them, they should apply to the strategi and overseers of embankments and surveyors ...; for I suppose that the latter, being mindful of my commands, will give first priority to such a duty. Furthermore I order the strategi to post up copies of this my public notice not only in the city, but also in each of the chief villages of the nome, so that all persons may be acquainted with these orders.” Transl. T. C. Skeat.

<sup>670</sup> E.g. Slootjes 2006: 49-60. Kehoe 2007: 166 is positive, using the same keywords (“equitable” appears twice in his text). He maintains that the bound colonate is a creation of Constantine, not Diocletian, citing *CTh.* 11.7.2 (319 CE) and 5.17.1 (332 CE).



questions whether anyone actually took its rhetoric at face value.<sup>671</sup> What is remarkable is that the government saw the need to present their initiatives to these audiences at all. Subelite strata were not habitually the targets for direct imperial communications, but by this time they seem to have become so, and reforms were adapted to at least appear to serve their interests. Perhaps to some extent they *did* serve their interests; an extension of the bureaucracy could benefit non-elites, offering some leverage against arbitrary treatment by the dominant classes.<sup>672</sup>

Transparency and universality limited the scope for elites to favor their own interests at the expense of those further down the social scale. Millar doubts that there was any enthusiasm for the taxation reform, but if, as Adams argues, the aim was to distribute the burden more evenly, and in particular to hinder the wealthy from shoving their obligations on the poorer, this might have been welcome – provided that it was not combined with an increase in the tax burden generally, and that the officials in charge remained relatively untainted by corruption.<sup>673</sup>

That it was unpopular with the higher strata is however clear. Literary sources that reflect elite sentiments abound with tales of vexation, although much of these complaints consist of long established literary clichés.<sup>674</sup> Directly connected with Diocletian's measures are however the revolt in Egypt and that of the *Bagaudae* in Gaul, which have both been explained with

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<sup>671</sup> Adams 2004, suggesting the author meant to impress the catholicus with his proactiveness.

<sup>672</sup> So e.g. Harris 2010: 474-5.

<sup>673</sup> Millar 1993: 196, Adams 2004, 2010. Ziche 2006: 132-3 rejects higher fiscal pressure overall, while Bransbourg 2008: 284 sees the reform as dramatically increasing the income of the state.

<sup>674</sup> Lactantius, *De mort.* 7.2-5 is the most detailed, and has some versimilitude in its description of the multiplication of officials and the extension of taxation to almost every town – a horror! It should be noted however that the more catastrophic scenes are associated with his true *bête noir*, Galerius (*De mort.* 23). On the long-standing use of taxes in the rhetoric of praise and blame, Ziche 2006: 132-33 who quotes a string of examples.

resentment against fiscal pressure.<sup>675</sup> Hitherto, the elites had been able to control the rates and lighten their own tax burden, a practice that with the new system was no longer available. Collection would have met with ardent resistance.<sup>676</sup> As an illustration of this disenchantment, Adams quotes a letter exchange from the Panopolis scrolls, a remarkable source for the local administration under Diocletian, which among other things contains the correspondence between Apolinaris, strategos of the Panopolite nome during the final years of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c., and the president of the nome council. The councilors had refused to appoint liturgists according to the new directives, and Apolinaris had to threaten them repeatedly in order to make them comply. In the end, he was forced to bypass the councilors and turn directly to the leaders of the dependent communities.<sup>677</sup> This illustrates both the resistance on the part of the upper classes, and the need for the government to reach beyond traditional hierarchies in order to achieve the desired results.

Another bone of contention between higher elites and the state is the increasing presence of the imperial administration through multiplication of officials. The aim of the institution of the *defensores*, for instance, is usually argued to have been to safeguard the more humble provincials against the abuses of local potentates, who were in control of the older, vernacular legal systems and against which they would otherwise have had a hard time asserting themselves. That the wealthy are described as those most likely to break the law is clear from the rhetorical formulas in the petitions, as well as the role they play in the rescripts in the codes, always as transgressors.

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<sup>675</sup> The events in Egypt are not well known and Domitius Domitianus himself is not mentioned in any literary source; both Aurelius Victor and Eutropius speak of Achilleus as the leader of the revolt. For the *Bagaudae* as opposing fiscal pressure, Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei* 5.21-8.

<sup>676</sup> So Ziche 2006: 134-6, suggesting there may be violence in connection to extraction, but if so it is not due to any intention to extract more, or the same amount on a shrinking base. Collection had been the domain of the *principales*, prone to favor their own and resenting a more even distribution of the burden. Adams 2010 argues for conscious obstruction of collection.

<sup>677</sup> Adams 2010: 5-6.

If all this was good in theory for the middling strata supposed to benefit from the new measures, the reality was likely less rosy. That the recourse to a governor for justice could have little effect even after taking the matter to the emperor, and receiving favorable rescripts, is demonstrated by an example quoted by Corcoran, where a governor failed to take action to protect the petitioner.<sup>678</sup> Bribes are one explanation, but failure may also have been due to lack of resources by which to follow up on the grand claims of the government. The repeated rescripts that give redress to those wronged by imperial officials are taken by Corcoran as a sign that the system lacked control, but they may also have been meant to show the opposite – that the state did not spare its own but was ready and willing to crack down on them if need be.<sup>679</sup> The preamble to the Prices Edict is ripe with phrases demonstrating how hands on and take-charge the emperors were, but the death penalties with which they threatened offenders suggest rather impotence: there was little the government actually could (or would) do by way of enforcement. The case of Apolinaris shows that he had little by which to back up his threats – the local gentry could ignore him for the longest time with impunity. Another example from the Panopolis scrolls is a public announcement where the state is seen to take action against the abuses of tax collectors.<sup>680</sup> The

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<sup>678</sup> Corcoran 2000b: 238. Frustratingly, the rescript told the litigant to take the matter to the governor, which seems rather unhelpful. Several papyri also suggest that redress in court meant little without enforcement, e.g. *P.Sakaon* 31, 36, 37 (from 280/1 and 284) by the widow *Aurelia Artemis*, striving to get rulings in her favor enforced.

<sup>679</sup> Corcoran 2000: 239.

<sup>680</sup> *P.Panop.Beatty* 2.229-244. “.I have thought it expedient to call upon all by means of this public notice, enjoining the collectors to abstain completely from such actions, understanding that should they be detected in such enormities they will not merely be visited with financial penalties but will be facing the risk of capital punishment; and the contributors, on the other hand, must not submit to such demands but furnish the provisions destined for the military commissariat precisely as laid down by regulation.” Transl. T. C: Skeat. The only means the procurator had was to threaten the transgressors and exhort the victims to stop being abused.

administration condemns the wrongdoers, exhorts those abused to refuse to comply with these transgressions – in other words, telling them to stop being abused – but supplies no concrete aid.

The administrative measures of the Diocletianic government have been condemned as a matter of words without resources. I would not go quite so far as to claim that the state was toothless, but the concern visible in both the framing of the legal and fiscal systems (and in the building inscriptions) with describing the government as taking decisive action is a pose that is largely feigned. This artifice is of interest in and of itself. I am not denying that the Diocletianic government was meddlesome – it clearly was – but wish to underscore that the administration actively *promoted* the idea that it was, exploiting intrusiveness as a selling point. This attitude is in itself an argument for excluding the higher elites as the primary audience intended.

#### *The governors of the new system*

The task of executing the rather large claims of central government to guarantee the well-being of every citizen in the empire devolved in large measure upon the governors. That they were pivotal in the new system can be seen in virtually every type of evidence treated in this study. It was undoubtedly the governors who saw to it that milestones were raised. They posted edicts and circulated letters, raised imperial honorifics and supervised construction, received the flow of petitions and meted out justice. They appointed staff, coordinated tax collection, and organized the persecutions. In some ways they were the most empowered governors of the Roman era, authorized to act on their own initiative and exercising choices in how to execute central policies, as seen for instance in the different approaches to publishing the edicts. They were entrusted with implementing virtually all of the reforms of Diocletian, which gave them unique power to further

them, or derail them, as they wished. That said, the insistence on universality and uniformity in the application of the reforms accorded them less scope, and their bonds with the emperors were tighter than before. The perhaps most significant feature about the new law codes is their insistence on the emperor as the ultimate authority in matters of justice, ensuring that his representatives perform the task in a globally uniform manner. The unadorned language is a product of function, not of cultural decline; they were not pleasure readings but meant to provide exhaustive and updated guidelines to the governors, to aid them in performing their increasingly burdensome task as judges.<sup>681</sup> The many rescripts by Diocletian that direct petitioners to the attention of the governors rather than himself stress that the part constituted the whole, that they were authorized to act on his behalf and had all the necessary training – that they were imperial bureaucrats, not aristocrats holding honorary positions.<sup>682</sup>

This toning down of the individual can be seen in the presentation of Aristobulus in the epigraphic record; he is more visible than any proconsul before him, but only in his official position – he is visible *as* empire, which is precisely the point. The same tendency is noted by R. R. Smith and Charlotte Roueché in contemporary portraiture at Aphrodisias. The texts on the bases no longer include personal data such as family, *cursus*, or benefactions, and offer little information beyond epithets that refer to conduct in office. This puzzled the authors, who suggested that the absence of personal data was due to the governors' being well known to the Aphrodisians, which made such detail unnecessary, but the same would have been still more true

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<sup>681</sup> Corcoran 2004: 58, 295: "Governors could now undertake the task of administration and justice in their smaller provinces with the codes clutched in one hand and a sheaf of imperial letters, both solicited and unsolicited, in the other."

<sup>682</sup> Corcoran 2000: 237 quotes numerous lines from rescripts by Diocletian that underline the competence of the governor, whom the petitioner is encouraged to address with his complaint; e.g. *CJ* 5.74.1, 5.51.6.

of local officeholders – rather, the emphasis was on what had by then come to constitute the basis for the position, that is, professionalism, not heritage, benefactions, or other aristocratic virtues. The statue images portray them with staring eyes and furrowed brows, intent on their tasks with nothing escaping their notice. Sometimes the support of the statue was a bucket of scrolls, showing that the official stayed “by his books.”<sup>683</sup> The governors thus functioned as the eyes, ears and hands of the emperor, more dependent on him than before. His sphere of action was literally diminished in the now much smaller provinces, removed from army commands. From an elite individual acting in his own interests as an “emperor/king in his own province,” he had become a professional in imperial service, with his political role circumscribed.<sup>684</sup>

He was also more often an equestrian, in a position where he was required to deal with entrenched local aristocracies that outranked him. This development should not be seen as an invention of Diocletian – it is a tendency at least a century old, perhaps met at the senatorial end by a lack of interest in participation. However, the new emphasis on the governors in Late Antiquity made their positions more vulnerable than before, both to bribery and to pressure from influential locals.<sup>685</sup> The autobiography of Libanius provides numerous illustrations of how local

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<sup>683</sup> Smith 1997 and 1999: 74.ff, Roueché 1998: 33 on the switch from seeing the governor as a member of society to emphasizing his merit as a bureaucrat. The tendency is felt more strongly later in the empire, with a steady number of governors honored. The later inscriptions are more vague, often in verse, adding cultural sophistication to the list of virtues required by the official. They are also usually poorly inscribed, on reused bases. The last well executed prose inscription was raised during the reign of Diocletian (*ALA* 7).

<sup>684</sup> Carrié 1998, emphasizing their dependency. Roueché 1998 on how governors were seen to represent the emperor rather than posed as private men, a tendency growing through the 3<sup>rd</sup> c.

<sup>685</sup> Honoré 2004: 122-3 sees the equestrian governors as giving greater legal protection to local subelite strata compared to the earlier aristocratic governors, who held greater sway and so could repress them more. This however assumes that it was the governor himself who was the force threatening the citizenry, while most maintain that his role was rather to protect their interests, for which purpose his lower rank would have been far from helpful.

aristocrats (such as himself) hounded the governors with requests for favors for themselves and their dependants.<sup>686</sup> The same challenges faced the governors in the courts, where well connected senators expected to be able to sway judgments in their favor. That local aristocrats were ever more independent of the state and at odds with it is noted by Corcoran, who however denies that this was new; it is, he thinks, more a matter of the codes making it visible to us in new ways.<sup>687</sup>

Against this background should, I believe, be understood the new visibility accorded to imperial officials through dedications to emperors. Pierfrancesco Porena has identified a unique group of inscriptions which he claims constitute a new genre, consisting of joint dedications to emperors by multiple praetorian prefects. The earliest are two items from the reign of Diocletian, one from the Dyarchy.<sup>688</sup> He argues that the relative insignificance of the findspots (*Oescus*, modern Gigen on the Danube; *Brixia*, modern Brescia) suggests that the original coverage was blanket, and reconstructs identical inscriptions in all communities of comparable size in the regions in question. His reconstruction is based on only two examples and quite speculative, and I am not convinced that either findspot can justifiably be called insignificant – *Oescus* for one was an important town in its region – but if accepted has points in common with the distribution of the imperial building inscriptions in Africa, on which he also comments.<sup>689</sup> The cache has a sibling of sorts in a dedication from *Castrum Novum* (Tuscan) north of Rome, where the

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<sup>686</sup> Libanius *Autobiography*, e.g. 106-9, 211, 232, 251. That he was known for annoying governors is something that he himself admits (e.g. 168). Slootjes, 2006: 1 describes the provincials as “relentless in their attempts to explore a governor’s boundaries of what he was willing to give them.” Roueché 1998: 35 stresses the difficulty of dealing with local nobles.

<sup>687</sup> Corcoran 2000: 244.

<sup>688</sup> *Oescus*: *ILBulg.* 8a = *ILS* 8929, *Brixia*: *AE* 1987.456. Porena 2003, *passim*, especially 103-106, 125-132, 150-151.

<sup>689</sup> Strongly in favor of the building inscriptions as evidence for the enactment of a centrally conceived policy, he suggests that the name of Aristobulus should be added to fragments that only preserves that of Sossianus, thus making him more visible still.

emperors of the Second Tetrarchy dedicated in unison to Diocletian *senior*. This is obviously a fiction, seeing that they were not present there together at any time, and perhaps it was but one of several of its kind in an area where the Diocletianic administration appears to have been quite active.<sup>690</sup> The praetorian prefects were not present together either at *Brixia* and *Oescus*, and it is likely that the initiative was not specific to these towns, but penetrated the area more deeply.

This tendency for imperial officials to dedicate to the emperor is strongly felt also in Rome itself, where all public dedications to the emperors (as far as the state of preservation allows us to tell) are raised by officials in imperial service, sometimes in tandem with others who hold the same office (such as two *rationales*), a phenomenon that is quite novel.<sup>691</sup> Some buildings in Africa may perhaps be interpreted as having a similar honorific aspect. The restoration of the Hercules temple at *Madauros* is suggestive. The deity was the *genius* of that city and the temple was originally raised under Gallienus, but it is highly unusual for an imperial representative in my chosen region to be involved in the construction of a temple, and it can likely be understood as a dedication to the emperor Maximian.<sup>692</sup> Twin dedications to *Hercules Invictus* and *Iupiter Optimus Maximus* were raised under Diocletian by the *ordo et populus* of *Thubursicu Numidarum* in the same general area, overseen by the *curator rei publicae* Umbrius Tertullus

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<sup>690</sup> *AE* 1964.235. There are also a bridge, three *mansiones* and a number of milestones attributed to Diocletian and peers in the same region, plus a dedication to *Iupiter* at *Fabrateria Nova* (San Giovanni Incarico) by Diocletian himself (*CIL* 10.5576). For the roadwork, see Papi 2004.

<sup>691</sup> Joint dedications at Rome: *CIL* 6.1119 by the *officiales*, and *CIL* 6.40722 very similar, both in or by the curia; *CIL* 6.1132-3 simultaneous dedications by two different *rationales*; *CIL* 6.36947 by two *egregii*, too fragmentary to determine what offices they held. Single dedicators include *AIIRoma* 119-120 by a military tribune, *CIL* 6.1128 and *CIL* 6.31378 by urban prefects, *CIL* 6.36946 by a *rationalis*, and *CIL* 6.1125 by a vicarius of two praetorian prefects. Several more are too fragmentary to tell, but no statue appears to have been raised by the senate and people.

<sup>692</sup> *ILAlg.* 1.2048. The Virtus temple raised at *Thubursicu Numidarum* may also be celebratory, although the cult to Virtus-Bellona is attested in the area earlier; see chapter IV n. 443.



who also built at *Madauros*.<sup>693</sup> Likely of the same period are similar twin dedications at *Sicca Veneria*, raised by two procurators in tandem in a manner that resembles the dedications found in Rome.<sup>694</sup> For imperial officials to dedicate statues and structures to emperors had previously been unusual, and to do so together with colleagues of the same standing from other regions is, as far as I know, an entirely new phenomenon.

The potency of the imperial image in local politics has been commented on several times, and is worth repeating – access to it was a privilege to be petitioned for, and the power to grant rights to it formed a significant part of the authority held by the governors.<sup>695</sup> The gradual monopolization of it by state officials accelerated under Diocletian, but it should be noted that, at least in Africa, this process was far from concluded. Although imperial officials had raised statues to emperors since the *curatores reipublicae* of Septimius Severus – and Sossianus himself dedicated to Carus as curator – still under Diocletian state representatives did not maintain exclusive control of the imperial image, but most statues are raised by locals, as before.<sup>696</sup> Kotula treated them as evidence of widespread enthusiasm for the administration, a reflection of the good times experienced by Africa under Diocletian and a response to the benefactions evident in the building inscriptions.<sup>697</sup> Their spatial distribution, however, rules out

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<sup>693</sup> *Thubursicum Numidarum: ILAlg.* 1.1228, *AE* 1957.94. They were placed in the “new forum” of the city. For Umbrius Tertullus, see *Madauros: AE* 1936.136.

<sup>694</sup> *CIL* 8.1625, *CIL* 8.1627.

<sup>695</sup> Lavan 2001: 49 puts strong emphasis on the link between governors and the imperial image.

<sup>696</sup> Moralee 2004: 60-1 notes the disappearance of salutary formulas from the mid 3rd c., which he ties to a distancing of the emperors from the citizenry. However, the drop is a consequence of the disappearance of their context, that is, building inscriptions, and should not be interpreted as a change in the relation between ruler and subject. In fact, what little local activity remains inscribed in the late 3rd c. is more celebratory in character than during any earlier period.

<sup>697</sup> Kotula 1985: 259, followed by Lepelley 1979: 263. The building projects of Aristobulus and Sossianus have sometimes been termed “loyalty statements,” although it is hard to imagine by

the latter – the majority were raised in an area where there are no testimonies to such munificence at all, and they should not be seen as loyalty statements or expressions of emotions any more than those of earlier periods. Like them, they were defined by local processes and, I would argue, primarily directed at local audiences, not the emperors themselves.

So were, I believe, the dedications by imperial officials, and the phenomenon should be counted as yet another means to make the imperial administration visible in the local context. In particular the Tetrarchic pillar monuments built by governors in the regional capitals, I would suggest, form part of a strategy to lend them the authority required to handle local elites that not infrequently outranked them.<sup>698</sup> Most would see in them, as in statues, “loyalty statements,” which assumes that the emperors were in some sense their audience. This according to me is a misconception, as much in the case of imperial honorifics by governors or other imperial magistrates as for local elites. Rather than expressing their obedience *to* the emperors, I would argue that these monuments are a means for the governors to draw authority *from* them, with their expressed blessing, if not even their command. That imperial authorization was necessary for their erection is at times clear from the monuments themselves, incorporating materials and locations that no governor, however trusted, would have had access to without the emperor’s permission. The column at the Serapeum in Alexandria comes to mind, a 50 feet high granite monolith topped by a 3m high porphyry statue. The four-column monument at Gerasa in Palestine makes much use of porphyry, by no means available nearby and presumably still under

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what mechanism the construction of a bath in a village in the High Tell could serve that purpose. By no means do these locations present straight routes to the attention of the emperor; on the contrary, most of them display their first contact with imperial authorities of any kind.

<sup>698</sup> See above p. 196-7, esp. n. 468. No such monument has been found in my area, but they likely existed at *Hadrumetum* and Carthage. A statue base fragment from Carthage likely retains the name of Sossianus. *CIL* 8.24559a: *DD(omini) nn(ostri) Di[ocletiani(?)] | [---]inus MA[---]*.

the emperor's monopoly. The message vested in the display of these materials and what it meant to have access to them would not have been lost on the more influential among the locals – it makes manifest the power the governors could draw upon, providing much needed leverage. It is no coincidence that the emperors of the Second Tetrarchy dedicated to the retired Diocletian; it should be seen as an attempt to solidify their position by drawing on his undisputed authority. The concern with establishing the governors of the new system as legitimate representatives of the imperial system as a whole can also be seen in a row of rescripts preserved in the Code of Justinian, where Diocletian tries (in vain, it seems) to direct petitioners to the governors, stating that they indeed have all the competence necessary and should be able to resolve their issues.<sup>699</sup> To provide them with proper monumental trappings was a physical counterpart of the same aim, seen also in the increasingly official aspect of the administrative structures themselves.<sup>700</sup> It is abundantly clear that they needed all the support they could get.

*The state and the senators: the case of Carthage and the Northeast*

The problem of giving them enough authority to handle their duties, while still not so much as to risk too much independence on their part, would be the most strongly felt in the case of the Proconsul of Africa, set to handle the strongest senatorial elites outside Italy. It is no coincidence that Diocletian assigned close associates to this post, in particular Aristobulus, whose origin was likely equestrian – thus not overly entrenched in the senatorial networks but owing his position to the emperor – yet as ex-consul with the ear of the emperor he had a better chance than most at

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<sup>699</sup> Corcoran 2000: 236-7, with numerous quotes stressing the competence of the governor and attempting to hinder complaints from reaching higher in the hierarchy, e.g. *CJ* 5.51.6, 5.74.1.

<sup>700</sup> So Lavan 2001b: 56

overriding local resistance and executing policies that were perceived as unwelcome. It is during his tenure that most of the reforms were drawn up and implemented, such as the collection and publication of the first code and the preparation of the second, as well as the groundwork for the division of Africa Proconsularis.<sup>701</sup> His role in administering his province is less known than for the Prefects of Egypt due to the lack of a comparable paper trail, but one letter to him from Diocletian survives (*CJ.* 2.13.1) that is quite telling. It repeats a law of Claudius II against employing high ranking patrons to obtain a favorable verdict, a law that benefits “universally all” and in particular the humble, *quare cum intersit et universe omnium et praecipue teniorum*, who are often oppressed by the unfortunate interventions by those more powerful, *qui saepe importunis potentium intercessionibus opprimuntur*. Aristobulus is told specifically to not fear senators: *nec metuas, ne praeiudices clarissimis viris*. According to Corcoran, this was not a mere gesture but a serious attempt to “stem abuse of the legal system by the powerful,” a sign of the difficulties facing even the most high-ranking governor when dealing with proud and high powered locals used to have their way.<sup>702</sup>

The letter was sent to Aristobulus at Carthage, the bastion of senatorial power in Africa. The relation between emperor and senator is a subject of much discussion, and especially so for the government of Diocletian. Ancient sources can be used to support both a positive and a negative view; the *Vita Carini* of the *Historia Augusta* portrays him as respectful of senators and

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<sup>701</sup> The new tax system may also have been a project of the Dyarchy – the term *capitatio* appears already in a rescript from 292. Millar 1993: 196.

<sup>702</sup> Corcoran 2000: 130, 243, with translation. He claims it was sent by Diocletian, not Maximian. Although a western province, Diocletian often communicated directly with Africa.

their old privileges, while Aurelius Victor speaks of *superbia*.<sup>703</sup> The former is an encomiastic text and not to be trusted, but it shows that a sign of a “good” emperor is that he goes lightly on the senators (which, incidentally, indicates who were expected to read the book). At the same time, this warns against taking statements to the opposite in texts seeking to revile Diocletian, such as the pamphlet by Lactantius, at face value. If literary evidence is unhelpful on the matter, it is not to be doubted that there was opposition between emperors and senators, as for any emperor. The senators represented a formidable concentration of power, and pursued their own goals first, those of the empire, at best, second. Emperors needed to keep them in check, both to secure the authority of his own position, and to be able to attend to the needs of the empire. A long established narrative in scholarship depicts the emperors from Augustus onward as engaged in a constant struggle with senatorial elites, employing a varied toolbox to keep the poppies from growing too high. Among their weapons are diluting them by enlarging the senate, devaluing them by elevating provincials to senatorial status, employing slaves and freedmen in the administration, shutting senators out from offices and commands, slackening the rule of presence at Rome and thereby transforming the rank into an honorary title, taking up residence outside the city (such as Capri or Tivoli) to maintain independence from grand family tactics, and finally to outcompete them on their own terms, with ever grander tombs, gifts, shrines and patronage networks. With Diocletian can be seen also a strategy of supporting the independence of those below them. The elaborate court ceremonials, regardless of to whom they should be attributed, may perhaps be seen as another tactic, putting pressure on elites to keep up in the way Louis XIV

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<sup>703</sup> Aurelius Victor, *De caes.* 39. Lactantius perhaps preserves an echo of the positive tradition by stating that Diocletian listened to his advisors – usually a virtue in an imperial *vita* – but only to distribute the guilt for his crimes onto others. Several of the vices he ascribes to Diocletian are inversions of traditional imperial virtues, including his building activities.

raised the bar through his exuberant court life at Versailles, which forced aristocrats to reside there and spend excessively in order to stay on trend and close to power.

Diocletian is also described as dealing the fatal blow to the senators by abandoning Rome, setting it up for the ultimate humiliation, the creation of Constantinople. This description goes together with the idea that the senatorial order had lost its significance. The move from Rome is described as not a strategy but a symptom, reflecting that the city had already become a museum, its elites hamstrung after the onslaught of army-prone Severans followed by a row of soldier emperors. The 3<sup>rd</sup> c. crisis was long seen as a caesura for the senatorial families of the High Empire, with only echoes of their former dignity surviving in the romantic notions of authors such as Ammianus Marcellinus. This view was in much need of modification, amply supplied by François Jacques in a seminal article which showed that there was in fact good continuity of families from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. into the 4<sup>th</sup>. He has been followed by among others Michel Christol, Michele Salzman and lately by Robert Chenault, showing that the power of the senatorial order was by no means broken.<sup>704</sup> That central authority reached a nadir during the troubled decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. could actually provide opportunities – the election of two of their own to the purple in 238 was the highest point in senatorial power since the accession of Augustus. They remained far too influential in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. to simply be written off as obsolete.

Certainly the difficulties evident in many of the administrative sources treated above testify to the continued significance of the order, and that the government had some maneuvering to do to work around them. The relationship was however far more complicated than simply one of

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<sup>704</sup> Jacques 1985; Christol 1999, denying that the rise of the equestrian order reflected the demise of the senatorial; Salzman 2002, esp. 29-35 on their continued power and prestige; Chenault 2008 on the strength of the senate after the departure of the court.

opposition. If the ambitions of the government to create a state with a transparent, functioning bureaucracy where every citizen and property was accounted for clashed with the interests of the great landowners at many points, the highest elites and central authority also had many interests in common. For one, the *pax romana* served their interests perhaps more than any other group, allowing them to maintain properties and networks on the international scale. As much as they loathed taxation, they profited enormously from state transports and state policing of the seas for their trade ventures. For the state, the amount of material and personal resources they controlled made it advantageous to attempt to co-opt them as far as possible, as the influence they wielded was enormous. Diocletian is himself seen to work with rather than against senators on many occasions, in appointments at Rome in particular. Of 15 consuls, 10 belonged to pre-crisis senatorial families, and most praetorian prefects and urban prefects were likewise of very old pedigree. The appointments do not suggest that the emperor sought to attack the order, but show him rather as “eager to incorporate the old aristocratic families into government.”<sup>705</sup> To crush them would not be advantageous, nor was it possible.

In this fraught relationship lies I believe the key to understanding the lack of imperial construction in the Northeast. Carthage remained one of the strongest outposts for the senators, and it is no coincidence that even a man of Aristobulus’ standing could be intimidated. The city had lost none of its power; the disappearance of building epigraphy from the small towns in its hinterland suggests rather that the attempts of Antonine and Severan emperors to curb the influence of the city by dissolving its *pertica* had instead caused it to gain in power and wealth.

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<sup>705</sup> Salzman 2002: 29-30, with details on the Diocletianic appointments, against the statement of Arnheim 1972: 39-48 that Diocletian was the “hammer of the senate.” He is also known to have kept the integrity of the order intact, while Constantine on the contrary drastically diluted it by elevating almost all civil servants to senatorial status; so Porena 2003: 60, 66.

The economic development in the West and Byzacena should not be interpreted as if exports from Northeast had halted, and it is furthermore not unlikely that significant portions of the proceeds from the economic ventures in the periphery ended up in Carthaginian pockets; it is in any case clear that the products from them did, even the ARS C wares that were exclusively produced for export to Rome. The hinterland of Carthage was also just then poised to come back as an export producer, eventually to eclipse the South. There was no lack of private wealth in the towns, manifest in numerous embellished *domus*, particularly at Carthage itself.<sup>706</sup>

The silence from the point of view of imperial involvement in construction coincides to a tee with the old *pertica* of Carthage, which is surely no accident of fate. The only study to treat the material in depth interpreted this silence in like manner as is common for the “abandonment” of Rome - as demonstrating that the area had by then become irrelevant.<sup>707</sup> This is clearly not the case. More likely, the silence had to do with the presence of Carthage, which was by far the most significant feature of the region, in spite of the poverty of epigraphic material from the city which so often causes it to be neglected. Kotula claimed that it retained its grip on the Northeast even after the dissolution of its *pertica*.<sup>708</sup> That the area remained penetrated by the interests of Carthaginians is manifest in the high number of them attested in honorifics, compared to what is the case in the other two areas.<sup>709</sup> For the Diocletianic officials, a different approach was

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<sup>706</sup> Leone 2007: 52-3, 66-77, 115-6; for a list of late Roman *domus* with bibliography, pp. 61-3. The largest record dates to the 4<sup>th</sup> c., but among those within the “late 3<sup>rd</sup> - early 4<sup>th</sup> c.” window are the House of Protomes, house 5 at *Bulla Regia*, Maison de l’Aurige and Maison du Char at *Thuburbo Maius*, Maison du Trifolium at *Thugga*, Maison de Lucius Verus and Maison du Paon at *Thysdrus*, and Maison d’Industrius at *Uthina*.

<sup>707</sup> Waldherr 1990: 403-4.

<sup>708</sup> Kotula 1979: 239

<sup>709</sup> A calculation of their visibility turned up 60+ individuals with ties to Carthage in the Northeast, with only 7 in the West . 3 in Byzacena, of whom not all belonged to the Carthaginian



required in a region so characterized by high elites than in the periphery where small town decurions struggled to hold their own – one of respectful distance. It should not be assumed that the presence or involvement of an emperor was welcome in all quarters. That the “provincials” craved emperors, and were disgruntled at being neglected, is to oversimplify, and deny the steep verticality of Roman era society – not all social layers had the same agenda or expectations on imperial authorities.<sup>710</sup> Statements as to the incessant care and involvement of the emperors may have been welcome among middling strata but were not music to senatorial ears, especially not when directed at inferiors that they were accustomed to control. To exploit imperial contacts, priesthoods and images in your own power negotiations is one thing, to have the imperial administration in your back yard quite another. It would have been especially difficult for the Carthaginian senators to accept a proconsul – normally one of their own – who represented the emperor more than their class, who refrained from getting enmeshed in local networks of *amicitia* and marriage alliances, who is not like themselves a landowner (as far as we know), and whose path to power was civil service.

This is I believe the context against which to see the absence of construction or indeed any activity associated with Aristobulus or Sossianus at all in the Northeast. To approach the towns

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nobility. Among them are two soldiers who served in the *Cohors I Urbana* (*ILAlg.* 1.2128; 2130), stationed at Carthage to protect the procurator, and then made it big at *Madauros*. Another man is entitled “curator of the fisc.” See Echols, E. 1961. “The Provincial Urban Cohorts.” *CJ* 57.1: 25-28. A legate of Carthage is honored at *Bulla Regia*, as are two procurators of *tractus Karthaginis* (perhaps the same individual), all representing locals rising in imperial service rather than in the Carthaginian *ordo* (*AE* 1964.178; *AE* 1911.7; *ILTun.* 1248).

<sup>710</sup> Polley 2007: *passim* but esp. 148-150, 166-168 argues that Africans were prone to usurp due to feelings of neglect. It is also at times assumed that the people of Rome flocked to Maxentius due to feelings of abandonment; however there is no evidence for how the Romans viewed him, and it was the praetorians who placed him in power. Porena 2003: 163 suggests they did so as a reaction to the threat of being dissolved by Galerius, having already been cut back by Diocletian.

in Carthage's hinterland directly would be to state imperial presence too overtly for the comfort of its elites. Aristobulus does not even appear in honorary roles in the area, as some later Diocletianic governors do. It is good to remember that the province of Africa Proconsularis remained undivided during the tenure of Aristobulus, who thus had his seat at Carthage (as did all other imperial bureaus). Yet, the closer to the center of power, the less articulated is the presence of imperial authorities, which is surely no coincidence. This, I would argue, is an instance of the attitude that Horster suggests that emperors maintained toward construction in provinces marked by strong elite presence, limiting their visibility as benefactors so as not to upset local power balances.<sup>711</sup> It shows that the Diocletianic government was able to read the social situation on the ground closely and adapt its policies accordingly. It also highlights that the towns in the area remained dependent on Carthage, a dependence that the state respected, opting not to implement a policy of strong involvement. However, at the same time the area over which the Carthaginian senators had direct influence was cut down severely by the province divisions. Instead of tackling them head on, it seems the strategy adopted by Diocletian and his associates was to give the elites of Carthage free rein, but within a drastically limited sphere.<sup>712</sup> To execute the divisions was a delicate matter, which required people of high standing who could be trusted to withstand pressure from the locals. Di Vita Evrard argued that this was the ground for appointing Aristobulus to the post in the first place, as a proto-division of sorts can be seen during his tenure with the legate *L. Volusius Bassus Cerealis*, stationed as it seems permanently

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<sup>711</sup> Horster 2001: 19-25; see chapter I pp. 127-8.

<sup>712</sup> Kotula 1979: 244 sees the subdivision of Africa Proconsularis as the first real blow at their influence. Also Arnheim 1972: 39, pointing out that the provinces most severely truncated by the divisions were the proconsular provinces of Asia and Africa.

at *Lepcis Magna*, soon to become the capital of Tripolitania.<sup>713</sup> That he and his colleagues planned and prepared the division is accepted also by Porena, who emphasizes the balancing act required in an area so dominated by people of money and rank with a booming economy on its doorstep, and Oshimizu argues that the divisions occurred already directly after their tenure, in 295 or 296.<sup>714</sup> To tread lightly and refrain from making a show of imperial government in the immediate area of their interest was one of the ways to keep Carthage and its elites on board.

This shows the pragmatism of the Diocletianic government, which knew how to pick its battles. A talent for cutting losses can be seen also in the withdrawals from the *Dodecaschoinos* in Southern Egypt, and in Mauretania Tingitana, in order to create more easily defensible borders.<sup>715</sup> It can also be seen, I would argue, in the distancing from Rome, which in many ways is a parallel case to Carthage. It is increasingly evident that the old idea that Rome had become irrelevant, and was neglected by Diocletian and his peers, must be reconsidered. Close attention was paid to appointments in the city, as noted above, more often than not favoring families of long standing. They got to grips with the social disorder in the city with no more clashes between populace and troops recorded, reportedly through cutting back the number of the praetorian guard. Perhaps apart from Nicomedia, Rome is the place where the Diocletianic government appears most active in the role of builder, involving all brands of construction save defenses,

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<sup>713</sup> Di Vita Evrard 1985.

<sup>714</sup> Porena 2003: 88. The centralizing tendencies of Diocletian seen in the African policies required that the matter be handled by a person of standing, such as Aristobulus, and Porena suggests that he was appointed even earlier than 290. Oshimizu 2012, *passim*.

<sup>715</sup> The withdrawal from the *Dodecaschoinos* in 298 and settling of the *Nobades*; Procopius, *Bella* 1.19.27-35; Barnes 1982: 55. The sequence in Mauretania Tingitana is less well established but appears completed before 290 CE, with the new border at *Oppidum Novum* (AE 1991.1746). Further sources are listed in Witschel 2006: 176 and Salama 1977.

from the earliest days of Diocletian's reign to his retirement.<sup>716</sup> This circumstance is puzzling, seeing the supposed disinterest in the city on the part of Diocletian and his peers. It pays to note the continued centrality of Rome on the Mediterranean trade networks; it remained the one location where all roads – by sea or land – converged, and the city received goods from all corners of what had become an increasingly regionalized empire.<sup>717</sup> The transport network seems to have been supported and exploited by the government: the roads to Rome were all worked over under Diocletian; a military weaving mill is listed in the city by the *Notitia Dignitatum* (as at Carthage); seals otherwise only found along the northern *limes* appear at Ostia and Rome.<sup>718</sup> Attention was clearly paid, and a member of the imperial family was present on the outskirts of town.<sup>719</sup> In a sense, the departure of the imperial government from Rome is a fiction, perhaps as much as its presence there was illusory under a row of emperors that barely set foot in the city.

I believe this fiction to be consciously maintained, for the same reasons as for the low profile kept in the old territory of Carthage. Seeing the vast amount of construction performed in the city, to raise a mausoleum – even if not intended for use – or to make additions to the palace,

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<sup>716</sup> Some of the structures restored or built afresh are the Curia Iulia, Basilica Iulia, parts of Basilica Aemilia and the forum of Caesar, Basilica Argentaria, the Augustan and the new Eastern rostra, the Forum itself, the Theatre and Portico of Pompey, Arcus Novus, the Hecatostylum, the Iseum Campense, and at least one nymphaeum. Additions were made to the Colosseum and to several baths, including the Antonine. Furthermore, aqueducts were restored, and a new branch of the Aqua Marcia was built together with a cistern. For references, see chapter I p. 34 n. 68.

<sup>717</sup> See e.g. Panella 1999. Rome is still the first port mentioned in the Prices Edict entries.

<sup>718</sup> All routes to Rome show signs of work, as do the Tiber quays. Economic structures in the city were attended to, such as a monumental warehouse along the Via Lata. See Papi 2004 on roads and roadstops; de Caprariis 1999 on economic installations; Weiss 2006 on seals.

<sup>719</sup> Valerius Romulus, young son of Maxentius and Valeria Maximilla, dedicated two statues to his parents at Zagarolo, c. 16 miles from the city walls, certainly before 306 CE; *CIL* 14.2825-6. Maximian only left Italy once after being relieved him of the Gallic commands by the institution of the Tetrarchy in 293, and he visited Rome on more than one occasion. His whereabouts from his triumph in Rome in 299 to the *vicennalia* celebration in 303 are entirely unknown. For his movements, see the imperial itineraries in Barnes 1982.

in order to uphold the idea of continued residency in the city, would have been easy to do; yet such manifestations were not made.<sup>720</sup> This is not due to a loss of political importance of the city and its elites, or to a failure on the part of the emperors to recognize its centrality, but a calculated choice not to articulate imperial presence strongly in ways that would provoke senatorial elites. By allowing these a freer range of the city of Rome than they had had since Augustus, a balance was struck where their authority over the city was acknowledged, but their influence outside it was curtailed. The response was a surge in honorifics to senators, long absent from public spaces, as well as in the erection of lavish private *domus*, testifying to a peak in the wealth and activity of local elites.<sup>721</sup> At the same time, in like manner as at Carthage, the direct influence of the city became limited to the urban prefecture, while the peninsula as a whole was provincialized and taxed, as it seems concurrent with Aristobulus' term in Africa.<sup>722</sup>

An uneasy but apparently functional working relationship thus characterized the relations between the administration of Diocletian and the highest elites. To maintain some distance from them, to allow them control of their core areas and protect their immunity, was more fruitful than to try to break them. If provoked too much, the aristocrats might raise their backs in support of a revolt (as has been suggested for the one at Coptos), but not as long as they stood to gain more from stability. Alexandria, second city of the empire and the undisputed queen of the East, also had points in common with Carthage, with elites that like the Carthaginians had grown rich on

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<sup>720</sup> One should however note the massive mausoleum on an imperial property along the *Via Praenestina*, the so-called Tor de'Schiavi, which dates to the Tetrarchy and was clearly intended for a member of the imperial family; see Maiuro 2005. It is feasible that the final years of the First Tetrarchy saw a change in the attitude to Rome; the baths in the Palatine complex associated with Maxentius were, according to Steinby 1986, begun before 306.

<sup>721</sup> Leone 2007: 66 with references to Guidobaldi 2000: 135. On the rebound of senatorial honorifics after Diocletian, Chenault 2008.

<sup>722</sup> Porena 2003: 62 argues that the policy was implemented in 292-4.

feeding Rome. Neither Alexandria nor Carthage were appointed “capitals,” even though both saw sustained residencies by senior emperors in connection to army operations, supplied bureaucrats for the regions that they dominated, and housed mints. Alexandria was provided with its own dole, as reported by John Malalas.<sup>723</sup> To suppose the two towns were passed over in the new administrative system due to a failure to recognize their importance is out of the question.

The reason, I suggest, is a conscious choice not to anchor the imperial administration in locations characterized by very strong elite groups, who would be antagonized, and whose sway over their areas would limit the ability of the government to operate. As with Rome, what comes across as absence should not be interpreted as neglect, or loss of significance, of the two cities; on the contrary, the silence is due precisely to their prominence. It is no coincidence that Carthage and Alexandria were the first places to which Maxentius turned for support after his coup; nor is it surprising that they both turned him down.<sup>724</sup> On the one hand, it testifies to the enormous importance of the two cities and the leverage held by their elites. For the state to win, if not their support, at least their acceptance, would greatly ease the burden of government. On the other, it shows that these elites saw their interests best defended by a *status quo*. Due to their role as ports controlling massive flows of export goods from their rich hinterlands, the wealth of their elites depended heavily on the maintained integrity of the empire. This required a strong central government – as much as they might have wished that it was not this particular one.

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<sup>723</sup> Procopius *Secret History* 26.41 on repeated gifts of grain to the Alexandrian poor; so also at Antioch, Malalas, *Chron.* 12.37.

<sup>724</sup> As narrated by Zosimus, *Hist. nov.* 2.12-14. The armies in Africa and Egypt remained loyal to Galerius, to the consternation of Maxentius.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

My initial aim with this study was to examine whether the building activity of the Diocletianic government represented an attempt on the part of the state to enter into relations with sub-elite provincial populations, primarily in order to widen the loyalty base on which the régime relied, and, secondarily, to counter the influence of local magnates, who had long used public construction as a means to create and maintain their power. If so, this could be regarded as an example of the tendency, outlined by Charles Tilly, for centralizing governments to form relations to their subject bases, which would suggest that Rome under Diocletian was acquiring the characteristics of a national state rather than an empire.

Previous interpretations of the material around which the study revolves, that is, building inscriptions in North Africa that date to the reign of Diocletian and which feature imperial officials in active roles, have concerned two main themes, by no means mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the texts have been treated as evidence of state intervention in the affairs of towns, compromising their autonomy and appropriating their resources – an intrusive state, detrimental to the civic network of the provinces. On the other hand, it has been treated as a restoration program following upon decades of crisis, a sign of a “rebirth” of prosperity for the empire. After examining the content of the texts, their spatial and temporal distribution, and their relation to building inscriptions of local agents and of previous imperial administrations, the results have been both satisfactory and, at times, surprising, showing far more complexity than expected. The query has, I hope, led to a deeper understanding of how the government of Diocletian interacted

with provincial populations. It has also led to a reassessment of the very medium of building inscriptions, and how it can, and cannot, be employed for historical investigation.

The inscriptions that feature the proconsul of Africa, Aurelius Aristobulus, and the governor of Numidia, Macrinus Sossianus, except when they appear only as dedicators, have little in common with the conventions of local builders. They are distinct both in the objects built, the locations chosen, and the phrases with which the projects are framed. The differences are not due to changed dedicatory practices; these remain stable for local builders from the Antonines through the reign of Diocletian, as shown by a large record of contemporary inscriptions posted by private men and towns and which all follow the old conventions closely. There is thus little correlation between Diocletianic imperial and private inscriptions, and the two should be seen as distinct phenomena. The imperial initiatives affected the local ones only inasmuch as they likely inspired the rendering of local projects in stone; they had no part in bringing these projects into being, and had no strong effect on the texts with which they were commemorated.

The words that framed the projects with which Aristobulus and Sossianus were involved are not much attested in epigraphy, and when they do appear it is exclusively in an imperial context, predominantly military. The small number of texts found in the study area that testify to earlier imperial projects (4 in total) are brief and unadorned, frame the emperor as an official, and concern infrastructural projects. Governors were charged with monitoring and authorizing public construction, yet proconsuls barely feature in the material, and it is not impossible that restrictions applied to their doing so. The works of Aristobulus and Sossianus thus stand out in stark contrast, in their great number, their civic locations, the types of objects built, and the



phrases that accompany them, which frame the emperor as benefactor and which had hitherto only been employed to secure the loyalty of troops.

To some extent, their efforts, which are attested only in the periphery, resemble those of governors in neighboring provinces, where imperial officials had always been more visible as builders and dedicators of buildings. The Northeast remains an area apart in its complete silence in terms of imperial construction. But even in Numidia and the Mauretanas, direct articulation of imperial presence and involvement of any kind was rare. As for imperial statues and dedications, ubiquitous at all times in African towns, these were defined by local concerns, raised by locals, with local offices as their goal. The emperors were not directly involved with them, either as initiators or as audience, and they are not a testimony to imperial attention or intervention. This generally low profile bears no relation to the actual impact of the emperor on the affairs of the region, which was quite deep, both as its largest landowner and through legislation that concerned towns and their administration, honorific practices, and public construction.

The examination has cast doubts on the idea that the surge in building epigraphy under Diocletian represents a “rebirth” of prosperity. In fact, the common practice of judging the vitality of a community by the rate at which it publishes construction projects through inscriptions is ill-founded, as most types of projects were never so recorded. Many of the more prominent towns do not seem to have engaged much in the practice at all, and in the ones that did, only certain types of buildings (the vast majority, temples), by certain agents (*flamines perpetui*), were inscribed. Both the disappearance and the reappearance of the medium likely has other explanations than prosperity. A potential cause for the former is the promotion to independent status of many towns, which severed their ties to Carthage. The metropolis appears

to have generated a dynamic much like that of republican Rome did in relation to the *domi nobiles*, who were eager to make it into the senate. Another explanation may be measures put in place by Severan emperors, which were aimed at capping municipal spending. Most likely, the disappearance is due in large part to changes in inscribing practices. This suggests that the reappearance under Diocletian should be seen as a momentary visibility of an ongoing practice of public construction rather than as a renewed ability to build. “Rebirth” is in any case not applicable, as the areas that become activated had never produced much building epigraphy before Diocletian.

Doubts apply also to the idea of a “takeover” of local towns by the state. The imperial projects were concentrated in peripheral areas, while the by far strongest urban network in the African provinces was left entirely untouched. Some of the communities built in were likely not even towns before Diocletian, but were only then promoted to this status. That locals were able to use their funds at will is amply shown by much local activity, in no way initiated or controlled by imperial agents. The costs for the projects were likely covered by local and imperial sources both, and in this, the activity of Aristobulus and Sossianus represents no departure from what had been the norm for imperial construction since the dawn of the empire.

The projects that record active involvement by imperial officials do show affinity to a certain genre of construction by locals, one that is barely visible in epigraphic sources but which likely had a strong impact on both the social and physical fabric of the province. This is the construction undertaken by the so-called “African oligarchy,” members of a small number of wealthy families, most of them senatorial and based in Carthage, and perhaps also in the ports of Byzacena. If the terms under which the *flamines* built their mass of temples do not entirely fit the

traditional model for euergetism in that they are tied to *munera* and are not styled as gifts to the community at large, the projects of this influential group certainly qualify as benefactions. The relation their projects form to the communities built in is perhaps most strongly revealed by the medium through which they are known, that is, through statues raised to them by the towns in reciprocation. These builders, usually patrons, operated on a regional basis, and were associated with the same popular type of projects as were Aristobulus and Sossianus. The few texts they have left behind underline that the buildings were gifts, to the entire population of the towns.

After an initial survey of the epigraphic sources, two phenomena call for an explanation: why did Diocletianic officials pose as builders in the periphery, and why were large tracts in the Northeast left alone? That the distinction is an accident of the sources is out of the question; the areas devoid of imperial construction present by far the largest record of building inscriptions, while the opposite is true of the periphery. The divide represents conscious choices, and to seek answers to what motivated them, I turned to sources for economy and demography on the one hand, administration and imperial monuments on the other.

As for the first policy of articulated imperial presence through construction, it is likely no coincidence that it occurs in areas marked by a strong contemporary economic development, which involved imperial agents at all levels: ownership, production, transport, consumption. The machinery of the *res privata* was integrated with the municipal network, particularly in the periphery, with individuals holding positions within both systems. The state relied on relatively independent local agents, both as sharecroppers and managers, and this independence appears consciously supported. The building projects were connected to an urbanistic policy, through the promotion of towns by subdividing larger territories, and through creating new ones where there

was none, often from imperial properties. To maintain a viable, small scale civic network in the area was, I believe, a measure meant to safeguard against too much power over key productions accruing to the hands of senatorial landowners, immune and influential. In this, the interests of the state and of local farmers (of a certain level of prosperity and independence) were in harmony.

The province divisions separated the Carthaginian nobility from control over the areas that had seen a marked rise in export productions in the decades leading up to the accession of Diocletian, and it is likely no coincidence that significant industries appear from c. 300 CE in the area around Carthage. It should be noted that these do not appear related to the surge in inscriptions in the Northeast, which occurred in inland areas far from the kilns and ports involved with export productions. The slew of building inscriptions that appear in the Northeast are celebratory in character, and are likely to be seen as a manner of imperial honorifics rather than as construction aimed at maintaining the physical fabric of the towns. There is no sign that this fabric was in decline at the time; no shrinkage of urban areas has been identified, or signs of dilapidation. What is visible in the medium is determined by epigraphic practices, which had come to concern only the more solemn and ornamental building projects.

The language applied in the texts recording imperial building projects has its origins in a rhetoric that surrounded imperial administration, especially when dealing with provincial subjects. Petitions and proclamations from the 1<sup>st</sup> c. onward include phrases that, in like manner to the inscriptions, present the emperors as guardians of the well-being of every citizen and community, and in particular the more humble. Its application becomes far more pervasive under Diocletian's administration, through more direct imperial communications such as edicts and the

collection and publication of legal codes. That this language appears for the first time in building inscriptions is a symptom of a general tendency under Diocletian to present the government as active on behalf of provincial populations, and it is quite possible that the policy is one of inscribing rather than building. Like the building inscriptions, the administrative reforms are socially inclusive both in content, distribution and rhetorical presentation, ostensibly catering to the population at large and often making a show at suppressing the wealthy. The social stratum addressed, judging by geographic spread, enemies framed, and what is asked in return, appears much the same as that of the building inscriptions: people of some means but not of wealth. The “poor” for whom Late Antique emperors posed as protectors should not be understood as the destitute – how chattels at the bottom of the social ladder fared likely mattered as little to late emperors as to previous ones.

Most of the measures were being devised at the same time as Aristobulus and Sossianus were active, from province divisions to the tax reform and legal codes, as well as the concept of the Tetrarchy which was implemented during their tenure. Not just the emperors and their activity were being broadcast, but the entire bureaucratic machinery was made visible in unprecedented ways, not least through imperial monuments, which I suggest were meant to establish their role as officials in imperial service, as parts that represent the whole. Several, if not all, instances where this “benevolent bureaucracy” was broadcast can be tied to taxation, a connection which is at times made explicit. This is not only true for several of the administrative measures, but, I would argue, for the urbanistic efforts in Africa as well, where smooth extraction was likely the ultimate aim for supporting the viability of rural townships. If efforts of the kind were always tied to areas of production and/or the needs of the army remains to be

shown by case studies on other regions. In conducting them, however, it is important to consider the local class structure and dedicatory practices, as well as what history local groups had of closeness or resistance to the imperial government.

This brings us to the perhaps most intriguing feature of the African imperial building inscriptions dating to Diocletian: their complete absence from the core areas of the province. The Northeast comes across as an “island of silence,” clearly delineated and corresponding to the old administrative territory of Carthage. This cannot be coincidental. The influence of the senatorial nobility in the metropolis must not be underestimated; it was almost on a par with that of Rome, and controlled resources of key importance to the empire. This is where an explanation should be sought to the conspicuous absence of imperial efforts in the area, an absence that represents a new approach to the highest elites. These wielded considerable power, and on the whole, did not take kindly to imperial involvement in their affairs. To refrain from presenting the government as active and present in the area was a pragmatic choice, respecting their sway, while limiting their sphere of action as far as possible. The case of Rome is, I believe, a parallel to this strategy: the city itself and its immediate territory were left to be governed by its own aristocracy, while the rest of the peninsula became subsumed under the capillary administrative system of other provinces.

To return to the proposition made in the introduction, the extent to which Diocletian’s government was interventive or reactive depends on perspective. The view that the policies which he and his peers introduced were rigid desk-top creations, ill adapted to the situation on the ground, is clearly false. The study has shown that the administration was closely informed of local circumstances, and were able to adapt their policies to them. Furthermore, many of the

features examined in this study, especially in the language applied, had a long history, which warns against treating Diocletian's measures as novelties (as well as seeing previous emperors as all that hands-off). In many ways, the implementation of both reforms and urbanistic projects were reactive; for instance the economic wonder of Africa was in no way Diocletian's creation, and the building projects and town creations in the area should be seen as responses to it, aimed at guiding it but not at assuming control over it. The globalization – if even completed during Diocletian's reign – of the *curatores rei publicae*, while extending the reach of the imperial government, also gave up much control to locals as they were henceforth elected by the towns. That said, although all measures were not novel, the reign of Diocletian showed considerable inventiveness, and interventiveness, in how they were broadcast and implemented. The policy of a *modus vivendi* with the highest elites by letting them well alone is, though pragmatic, rather novel, as are many aspects of the administrative system. I would tentatively conclude that yes, the administration of Diocletian was interventive, but I would reject that there was ever a grand master plan that guided all its choices.

In this, it fits with the model of Charles Tilly, who asserts that a sign of the budding national state is its tendency to create bureaucracies, but who denies that it does so with a formulated idea of what manner of state it strives to become.<sup>725</sup> Many aspects in this study have confirmed the validity of applying his model to the Diocletianic government: that it created multiple points of contact with sub-elite social strata, that its communications describes the relation between ruler and subject in terms of mutual rights and responsibilities, in that the ultimate aim of these measures was extraction. There is a concerted effort at making the relation

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<sup>725</sup> Tilly 1990: 25-6. The institutions created were by-products of seeing to immediate tasks.

between state and subject visible, exploiting proactivity as a selling point. A range of channels are worked to this effect, from reforms and rhetoric to art and, I would argue, public architecture. Where I see the model of Tilly as problematic is in its negative formulation of the role of the state, as an entity grafted upon society and exploiting it, and only grudgingly ceding rights to the population after a repeated cycle of resistance and suppression. According to his model, the idea that the state poses as the protector of the rights and property of the populace is a product of a gradual development, one that was not desired by the state but only accepted as a necessity.<sup>726</sup> It appears rather that this idea is a fundamental part of the very concept of monarchy, as much a vehicle to create power as a consequence of attempts to sustain it. It is eminently present in one of the earliest examples of monarchic administration, the code of Hammurabi:<sup>727</sup>

*Then did Anu and Enlil call me to afford well-being to the people,  
me, Hammurabi, the obedient, godfearing prince, to cause righteousness  
to appear in the land,  
to destroy the evil and the wicked, that the strong harm not the weak,  
and that I rise like the sun over the black-headed people,  
lighting up the land.*

According to Tilly's interpretation of this quote, with which he begins his discussion on statehood and state formation, the lines show how states coerce their populations – his focus is on the destruction of the wicked. I would recast this message as one of strength, not meant to

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<sup>726</sup> Tilly 1990: 32, 64.

<sup>727</sup> Frankfort 1946: 193; quote taken from Tilly 1990: 1.



scare the subjects into submission, but to reassure them of the competence and sound objectives of their ruler. The statement that the king brings well-being to the people and that he hinders the strong from harming the weak is reminiscent of the rhetoric applied to Roman era administrative documents, showing that the idea that a monarch's mandate stems from his ability to protect the rights of the population is as old as monarchy itself. While Tilly describes the state as in close affinity with the highest elites, both seeking to exploit the masses, I see rather masses and monarch as having a shared interest in keeping the aristocratic poppies low.<sup>728</sup>

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<sup>728</sup> Tilly 1990: 34-5, 100-1, where he describes resistance to taxation as coming from the lowest stratum, while in the Diocletianic record it is more strongly associated with elite strata.

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